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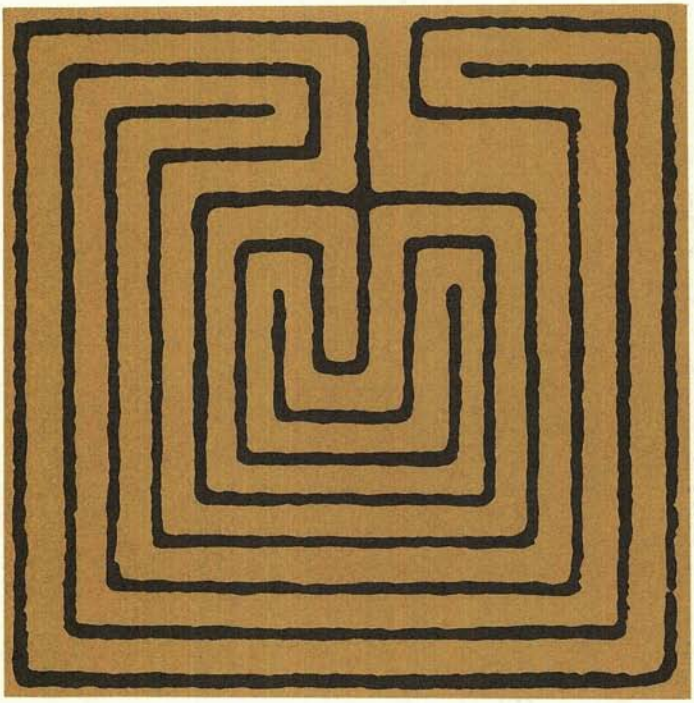

The Arts and Humanities in America's Schools

Marianne Amarel
Thomas Barone
Martha Barylick
Robert Donmoyer
William G. Durden
Paula M. Evans
Karyn Esielonis
Stephen R. Graubard
Lonna Bush Jones
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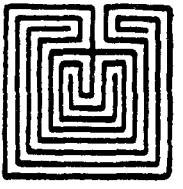

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Preface to the Issue, "The Arts and Humanities in America's Schools"

THE UNITED STATES appears to be experiencing today—again—one of its periodic alarms over the condition of its schools. Whatever the cause of this anxiety—a concern with great numbers of unemployed, seemingly unemployable youth, or what many believe to be the country's incapacity to compete effectively with other industrial states—there is a growing disposition to imagine that many countries suffer from fewer educational ills than we do and that their educational health must in some significant way be related to their economic robustness. The perpetual comparison of American schools with others abroad thought to be not only different, but better, is implicit acceptance of the fact that American schools are not functioning as well as some would wish them to do.

Inevitably, such comparisons dwell most frequently on quantifiable differences of the kind that makes possible the comparison of the American achievement in a specific subject—math, physics, foreign language, or some other—with the accomplishment of students in other countries. The differences are in some instances very substantial; they confirm the judgment that is now almost universally accepted, that America's schools are not doing as well as they might and that their deficiencies are almost certainly storing up problems for the society in the future. Among those who link these educational defects directly to the country's economic problems, there is a compelling sense of urgency; it matters profoundly whether the issues are attended to promptly, whether the effort made to remedy specific conditions is commensurate with what is perceived to be the gravity of the crisis. For, in the minds of many, the educational condition of the country can only be understood as a crisis calling for some sort of emergency measures. Any less cataclysmic portrayal of the situation, in their view, is a denial of its true gravity.

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"The nation at risk" concept, whatever its hyperbolic tendencies, expresses perfectly the frame of mind common to those who know that, in a society not given to speaking softly, it is only the arresting phrase, uttered with conviction and force, that carries any promise of being heard. Still, if the nation is at risk—if a new mediocrity threatens—what is to be done? How can one recruit a new generation of teachers dedicated to their profession, committed to their students? What can one do to inject greater seriousness among students, appealing to them in ways calculated to move them? How, in short, can the putative deficiencies between what American students learn and what others learn be reduced so that there is no longer as obvious a disadvantage on the American side? These issues are being much discussed at the moment, more, perhaps, than they have been at any time since the Soviets launched *Sputnik*.

Whether this discussion is in fact addressing the questions that today cry out for solution, or whether too much of the discussion is set in the context of yesterday's crises—imagined or real—is rarely acknowledged. It is as if we know all the questions and that only the solutions are missing—and by no means all of them, at that. For, if we can believe those who are the most ardent in advertising their solutions to the "crisis" of America's schools, it is only funds that remain in short supply. Open the federal purse, some argue, and all sorts of additional goods will follow automatically.

This is, obviously, not universally believed. Indeed, in one way or other, this issue of *Daedalus* repudiates any such simple remedy. The issue originates with a more unconventional proposition; without denying the insufficiencies of American school instruction today in science, math, and any number of other supposedly "useful" subjects, it asks whether the record in any branch of learning is today adequate, whether the crisis of the moment does not derive largely from the fact that there is so little understanding of why it is useful for certain things to be known, why in today's world certain accomplishments are desirable, indeed necessary.

It is scarcely surprising, then, that this issue opens with a consideration of instruction in the arts. For most public schools in America today, such instruction is deemed a luxury, available as an elective option for those who think it might suit their educational purpose to take such a course. Few, however, worry about the country's deficiencies in arts instruction in the way so many do when contrasting

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the years that a Soviet student spends in studying physics and calculus, or the hours each day that a Japanese youth is prepared to give to the study of chemistry and the computer, with what is traditional in America's more relaxed schools. It is taken for granted that competence in math and the sciences is important, that the United States would be much better off if a greater number of its youth chose these subjects above the "softer" options available to them and that so many prefer to take. There is no comparable alarm, it must be said, about the failure of American youngsters to take instruction in the arts. The arts are thought, by all too many, to be frills that can be dispensed with, particularly in a time of economic stringency.

This, interestingly enough, is not the view taken by certain of the best private (so-called independent) schools in the country. As proud of their instruction in the arts and of the superb facilities they provide for that instruction—no less impressive, in their own way, than the athletic programs and sports facilities provided—they express what such schools believe to be their continuing concern with the whole person, with creativity as well as sportsmanship, with character as well as personality. Refusing in almost all instances to make a total commitment to a "hothouse" educational philosophy that would judge an individual only by his or her intellectual accomplishment, almost all the best private schools insist that their uniqueness derives from the fact that they offer something more than a "passport" to the best colleges of the country, that they are in one way or other preparing their students for what is grandiloquently called "life." Instruction in the arts is thought to be an absolutely essential part of that preparation. It is a serious enterprise for the best of these schools.

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund, in choosing to award prizes for exemplary arts programs in America's public schools, is making several assertions, all relevant to its public mission. First, and perhaps most obviously, it is saying that the arts merit attention in all of America's schools, and that a foundation does well to encourage those institutions prepared to make exceptional efforts to achieve excellence in all these disciplines, and to do so at a time when many are wholly preoccupied with doing other things. Second, and no less importantly, it is saying that we know so little of how successful instruction in these areas is accomplished—that there is so little understanding of how the experience of one institution can be made relevant and meaningful to another—that it behooves us to learn

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more about what is being done in the few that have been singled out for commendation. Where the arts education profession is so diffuse, so lacking in organization and structure, where public support for such education is so crucial, the more that is known about exemplary programs, the better. Their experience can only be illuminating. Third, and perhaps most crucial of all, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund awards, which are only the most recent manifestation of the Rockefeller's longtime interest in the arts, remind us that education calls for manual, physical, rational, and organizational skills that go far beyond what is sometimes assumed to be the governing virtues of textbook learning. In conceptualizing, in doing, and in making—and seeing the necessary relations between the three—there are uniquely important lessons for many in our society, and not only for youngsters whose parents can afford to send them to some of this country's finest schools.

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund commitment to arts education is long-standing; it does not derive from a sudden perception that this may be a propitious time to inquire into educational practices of all kinds, that the arts kite can now be hitched to another that is already in full flight, one that bears the label "Science." Even less is it derived from a fear that in the new preoccupation with basics—with those subjects that can be incontestably called useful—the arts are likely to go to the wall. While these conditions may indeed exist, they do not in fact account for the new interest in arts education. That interest, in a fundamental sense, is based on a widened appreciation of why conventional learning is no longer sufficient and why it makes so little appeal to many who are both motivated and able. It is based also on the recognition that it is not possible to teach the arts merely as courses in "arts appreciation," which is not to say that they ought to be taught as courses in "creativity" and "individual expression." In the arts, as in so many other subjects, to discover the rationale for what one is doing and to articulate that rationale, to create "communities" of teachers, students, administrators, parents, and others capable of understanding the enterprise, is immensely difficult. To take pleasure in the arts while denying every temptation to exaggerate their uses, to avoid both "showmanship" and "defensiveness," is essential. In short, the effort must be to give the arts a firm place in the school curriculum, creating a reasonable and rational alternative for those who understand its likely benefits. This presumes, however, a

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willingness to look closely and candidly at what is being accomplished today, to make distinctions between the meretricious and the creative, and to acknowledge the enormous difficulty of achieving excellence in arts instruction.

The first part of this *Daedalus* issue suggests what can be accomplished, what indeed *is* being accomplished in certain American public schools in the arts. The second part of the issue recounts a more melancholy tale, dwelling on what is *not* being accomplished in many more American schools, in disciplines that no one can believe to be peripheral. Our concern in this second part of the issue is with education in the humanities. While it is fashionable today to deplore school conditions, it is presumptuous and dangerous to argue as if teachers in the tens of thousands have taken leave of an earlier sense of professional responsibility, that they, like their students, have become louts, that they are uncaring, unconcerned, and unwilling to assume authority over their charges. It is no less foolish to act as if all goes well, to believe that every blip on a mythical national grade curve in reading abilities or in some other subject represents a major advance. It does not. In the humanities—specifically English, foreign languages, and history/social studies—conditions in several cities are now being studied by teams of investigators commissioned by *Daedalus* to undertake that inquiry. The results of their study thus far suggest a level of accomplishment that can only be called disheartening. The inquiry is not far enough advanced for us to say with confidence that America's schools today suffer a uniform curricular insufficiency, that the condition in the humanities is everywhere equally bleak. Still, the opposite proposition—that some schools are doing admirably in all these subjects and that parents enjoy great choices—is equally untrue. What we can say, on the basis of still very limited findings, is that a study of school conditions in a single Northern city, complemented by the beginnings of a comparable study of conditions in a Southern city, when taken together with closely examined materials, published and unpublished, persuade us that our mythical "Libertyville" may not in every detail describe conditions in "Everywhere, U.S.A." but that its basic features resemble "Many Places, U.S.A., 1983." Unless this is seen to be true, and unless there is a willingness at least to entertain the possibility that what one team has discovered to be the school conditions of a single city, conditions that

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are to a substantial degree present also in a second city many hundreds of miles away, there is no possibility of looking at school instruction dispassionately. The import of the study needs to be stated bluntly: education in the humanities for hundreds of thousands of American children in public and private schools today is accomplishing substantially less than what even the most tolerant critics would be prepared to accept. So that the full meaning of this assertion is grasped, it implies that learning even fundamental skills—to write and speak correctly, to read intelligently and easily, to have some sense of the world as it exists today, to be able to contrast it with what once existed, and to feel at all confident about one's judgments, to perceive what a judgment is and what it implies—is almost wholly beyond the abilities of vast numbers of the young, not only those who are habitually truant, but also many who attend school with some regularity. This is the true crisis of our schools; yet the strength of our country may reside in our willingness to confront these truths, even to acknowledge them, and to do something about them.

The essays in this volume have made no use of the complex methodologies of the contemporary social sciences; no elaborate questionnaires have been distributed, computers have not been operating throughout the night to provide statistics and other relevant data. The research method has been more traditional in its nineteenth century proclivities. Alexis de Tocqueville, coming to investigate the prisons of America, ended by writing what may still be the most magisterial single study of American society. Might a comparable study of America's schools today yield a comparable result? It is impossible to say. Such an effort has never been made.

Our own ambitions have been much more modest. Our purpose has been to report on what we learned about schools by looking and listening, by visiting classrooms, by talking with teachers in class and out. Whatever we have accomplished would be immeasurably less had they not welcomed us, taken us into their confidence, shared their concerns with us. The contributions of principals, headmasters, and other educational administrators have been no less crucial. Yet, we have not simply reported, producing a text that others provided us. Instead, we have tried to look at these institutions as complex instructional mechanisms operating generally with limited resources in a culture that is not always receptive to their larger purposes.

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Looking always at what was being communicated, how well this was being done, and with what apparent intentions, our purpose has not been to find fault. Our eyes may have deceived us on occasion; our ears may have betrayed us; we may have made too much of small incidents. One observer's sense of disorder may be substantially different from that of another; the threshold of tolerance for noise, for example, is not the same for all of us. There are other, more substantial differences, in nuance and emphasis. Yet, the story communicated by all members of the group—those who have written essays that appear here and those who lacked the time to prepare such reports—is essentially the same. That foreign languages are not being well taught is scarcely a major revelation. The reasons, however, need to be understood, for they relate to the fact that English instruction (particularly in writing, but in other respects as well) leaves much to be demanded in all but a few of the schools. Nor do our hearts leap with joy over the quality of instruction in history/social studies. Even in the mandatory American history high-school course, where the texts are often excellent, the instruction is not inspired. Have we asked for too much? Are our standards unrealistic? We believe not. We think more can be accomplished, substantially more, and we are just arrogant enough to believe that certain of the recommendations made in this issue of *Daedalus,* if taken seriously, could make a significant difference for very many students very quickly. This, however, presumes a willingness to look closely at how we treat the young, why we segregate them as we do, and why we are so undemanding in our fundamental approaches.

If there is a single message that comes through in all the essays on the schools of Libertyville, it is not that we know what we are doing when we teach children and that we do a number of things badly, but that we have so little sense of why we do what we have elected to do, and why so many who sit in the classrooms of our schools seem apathetic, indolent, and insufficient. We may persuade ourselves—or at least some do—that foreign language instruction is a luxury, that boys and girls growing up in the "American imperium" have no need of such frivolous knowledge. The same, obviously, cannot be said of English. What is striking, certainly, is that the accomplishment in the second is no more impressive than in the first. History may be old-fashioned; social studies may be the only realistic alternative for

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young people who want to know how to manage their affairs in today's world. We teach neither well. This is the message that the second part of this issue seeks to convey. Our failure is not partial. It is not that we know how to teach English, but that French eludes us; not that we know how to teach economics, but that eighteenth century diplomacy is boring; it is simply that the relevance of all—or any of these subjects—is obscure. This is another way of saying that we do not know what competences we wish to instill in the young, that we no longer understand why writing well or speaking correctly matters. Having lost that knowledge, or having none that is relevant to the kind of society we imagine we are living in, we go through certain conventional paces, hoping that the educational values of yesterday will somehow be trimmed and fashioned to serve the needs of tomorrow. The existence of colleges and universities—which, despite economic stringency, maintain certain standards—creates a minimum floor for at least a few. Others have not even that incentive to perform according to the rules. The injunction that they are risking their future—their earning capacity—is meaningless to youths who often know not a single adult who is regularly employed, let alone well employed by conventional American standards.

What is to be done? The American public—and not only those who are themselves parents—needs to understand why this situation is intolerable, and not only in economic terms. Until education is made the country's first national goal, we will continue to beguile ourselves with secondary issues. The colleges and universities of the country, confronted with their own grave problems, need to be made more conscious of these others that make their own almost inconsequential by comparison. Whether they can do much to help—whether they can transform themselves to recognize that they have something to offer, and not only in their putative "learning and scholarship"—is a very real question. Finally, and most important, a teaching profession needs to be created—not revived, but fashioned anew—to serve the kinds of youth that now flood the country's schools. The nineteenth century physician, making his way over country roads or through teeming slums, without the advantage of telephone, automobile, or modern drugs (not to speak of modern learning) may be a romantic figure, but one that is wholly irrelevant to the medicine of today. The teaching profession cannot claim to

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have made comparable strides in reconceptualizing its purposes. Bureaucratization of school administration, a profitable and aggressive commercial textbook industry, the construction of school laboratories and libraries, the introduction of computers—none of these, individually or collectively, can displace the informed, caring teacher, who understands the challenge of succeeding in a task infinitely more demanding than a hundred others that pay salaries two, three, or four times higher than any that can now or ever be contemplated. It is impossible to start anew, to pretend that nothing is in place, that everything can be done. It is not impossible, in America at least, to say that this educational system is just not good enough, that it cannot be sustained in its present form. It will not be the president of the United States who can be waited on to give the lead; it must come from broader segments of the public, not least that part of the public which prides itself on its modernity and its open-mindedness.

The uniqueness of this *Daedalus* issue may reside in the fact that while one part of it celebrates educational achievement, and quite properly seeks to draw attention to it, another part suggests how immensely complex are the problems that most American schools confront today, and how difficult it will be to remedy conditions that express something more than social conflict or cultural confusion and incoherence. The schools of America, for better or worse, tell us much about what this society is capable of doing, but also what it frequently chooses to neglect, ignore, or be reticent about. Each aspect of the condition merits continuing attention and reflection. This is precisely what the American Academy of Arts and Sciences proposes to do. We think of this *Daedalus* issue as only the first installment of a report that will eventually touch on humanities instruction more generally in the country. Our decision to publish these first reports reflects a decision by the researchers themselves that the materials they had gathered were too significant to be laid aside at this time.

Thanks are due to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund for support with our arts essays; the National Endowment for the Humanities deserves our thanks for launching and supporting our continuing study of the humanities in America's schools. Both parts of this issue are so integral to each other that the greatest debate occurred among the editors as to which part should come first. Some felt that the gravity

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of the conditions described in the second part gave it a good claim for priority. Others argued that tidings of accomplishment ought to precede tales of woe. Both agreed, however, that only those who read the whole volume will understand the import of what this issue of *Daedalus* strives to communicate.

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Thomas Barone

Things of Use and Things of Beauty: The Swain County High School Arts Program

It is clear that children should be instructed in some useful things . . . [but] to be always seeking after the useful does not become free and exalted souls.

Aristotle[1]

Weaving, hit's the prettiest work I ever done. It's asettin' and trampin' the treadles and watchin' the pretty blossoms come out and smile at ye in the kiverlet. —

"Aunt Sal" Creech of Pine Mountain, Kentucky[2]

THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS of western North Carolina are aging gracefully. Thousands of years ago (geologists tell us), they possessed the kind of brittle, angular, energetic majesty of the Rockies. But with an infinite patience, Nature has rounded their formerly pointed peaks into gentle curves and cushioned them with a lush green canopy. Underneath this blanket of vegetation, one can observe the aging process up close, as the mountain streams etch wrinkles into the face of the earth. The centuries of erosion have worn down this land, but strength and dignity clearly remain: even at their age, they are still able to lift themselves into the grandeur of the clouds.

Somewhere within these ancient hills lives a young man named Donald Forrister. Every weekday morning around half-past seven, he leaves his wooden frame house, climbs into his pickup truck, and

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heads north. Down a narrow dirt road to the highway, he rambles, through the town of Bryson City, and a few miles later, into the parking lot of Swain County High School.

Forrister is an art teacher—the only art teacher—at the school, and the old Smoky Mountains provide, in many ways, an apt metaphor for what he has accomplished here. Slowly, carefully, patiently, Forrister has succeeded in shaping formless adolescent talents into aesthetic sensibilities of impressive maturity. Almost single-handedly he has created a high-school arts program that is not only outstanding, but—perhaps even more remarkable—cherished by both the school and county communities. Any such embrace is, we know, quite rare in an era in which the arts are often treated, in Jerome Hausman's phrase, like "unwelcome boarders in a burgeoning household."[3] Thus, even though the story of the Swain County High School Arts Program is, in many respects, a singular one, I believe we might learn from its telling much that is pertinent to the general survival and flourishing of the arts in our schools.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

It was a spring morning in 1982 when I first met the central characters in the Swain story: the students. That morning, as usual, they flowed down from the mountains like individual drops of dew that had coalesced into a stream. Along the way they were joined by teachers like Don Forrister, members of the Swain administration and staff, and me. Together we poured through the school doors.

The mountains looming above the school provide a sense of locale—but move inside, and where are you? Many places you have been before—the more or less standard Modern American School Plant, circa 1978. The building's right-angled innards seem familiar: the variously sized cubicles of space that stare blankly at the newcomer, the prolonged rectangular corriders that invite one, without a hint of destination. I am surprised to find here in rural North Carolina a school building similar to those where I live, in the Cincinnati suburbs, partly because of my preconceptions about the level of financial support for education in a county so rural and with so small an economic base. But there it is: the same charmless modernity, the refreshing lightness of the glass and brick, the airiness of the pleasingly massive open chamber that dominates the heart of the building

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and serves primarily as a reading area and media center. But a startling difference, so crucial to our story, becomes vividly apparent: from the boldly executed 5- by 5-foot abstract expressionist painting hanging on the brick wall near the lobby to the administrative offices, to the cloth wall-hangings (stuffed tubes intertwined playfully into serpentine knots) dangling above the stairwells, to a remarkable set of drawings near a side entrance (one, a carefully composed and brilliantly colored still life of red and green apples)—there is *art*. To be sure, there is room for many more pieces, but the presence of any student artwork of such quality adorning the inside of a high school is unusual and exciting, and serves to whet one's appetite for learning more about these students and their arts program.

The student body of Swain County High School averages about five hundred, of which eighty usually elect to take art. During their freshman or sophomore year (in Art I class), students are introduced to what Forrister considers the foundations of aesthetic awareness: line, form, design, and color. These concepts are explored not only through examination of the works of major artists, but also through a number of individual projects completed under the critical eye of the teacher. The forms of arts and crafts offered in Forrister's program include macrame, pottery, fibers, weaving, drawing, photography, silk-screening, papermaking, batik, stitchery, quilting, lettering, and airbrushing. According to Forrister and his students, it is from this exposure to a smorgasbord of possibilities that a student will sense proclivity toward one or more areas, in which he or she then selects a set of major projects for Art II and III. It seems probable that the range of activities enhances the overall success of the program.

But training in every area of the arts is certainly not provided in the program. The emphasis is on the visual: the development of musical talent is under the aegis of the school band, while students with a literary or theatrical bent must look to the English Department for training. And that many of the visual art forms, including all forms of painting, are missing is owing to the program's primary financial source: supplies, equipment, and the services of Don Forrister are paid for largely by federal vocational funds. Hence, the emphasis on the commercial arts and crafts (although not a totally exclusive one, as we shall see) provides the program with a strong, local Appalachian flavor. To paraphrase Oscar Hammerstein, the hills are alive in the Swain County High School Arts Program—which accounts for

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some measure of the program's success as well as its local support. This vital link with the community deserves documentation, and to do that we move back outside into the hills.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT: NATURAL RICHNESS / ECONOMIC POVERTY

Swain County, North Carolina, is by and large a national park—or more precisely, over half of the county is situated in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and over half of the Park is in Swain County. About one half of the Cherokee Indian Reservation, including the town of Cherokee, is also within the county lines, but, like the Park to the north, is outside the county's governmental jurisdiction. Since the federal government controls 82 percent of Swain County, only 18 is left for local taxation.

In the lower third of the county sits Bryson City, the county seat by default, and hardly a city at all; it is a town of fifteen hundred people, and except for Cherokee, the only municipality in the county. The texture of life in Bryson City is of course influenced to some degree by its locale, but in other ways seems quite typical of Small-Town America. There are, no doubt, some of the same qualities that Carol Kennicut found so dismaying in turn-of-the-century Gopher Prairie: a self-satisfied provincialism in values and mores, perhaps; a cultural bleakness that even rules out most forms of public entertainment (save a games arcade and one "last picture show"), certainly.

Rebutting this notion, a local newspaper asserts: "Bryson City ain't very fancy, but it's real."[4] And if that sounds like a cliché, it also has the ring of truth. I observed among the populace a genuinely courteous and friendly demeanor, with no hint of pretense. And though much of the town's commercial property is incessantly drab, many of its houses exude a homemade charm lacking in the dour architecture of Gopher Prairie.

And, unlike the folks of *Main Street,* one can detect a curious ambivalence among some of Bryson City's natives concerning its small-town status. The local press may insist: "If you're looking for a place with a lot [of] neon, fast-food restaurants and crowds of people, don't come to Bryson City"—and rightly so, for Bryson City has indeed managed to escape some of the cultural blight of the twentieth century. But there is a note of false bravado, perhaps even thinly

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disguised desperation, in that quote. For one thing, there is an unmistakable feeling of pride among the locals in their newly opened Hardee's, the first national fast-food chain to locate a franchise in Bryson City. But, more important, the quote comes from the *Smoky Mountain Tourist News*[5]—so its seeming disdain of crowds is in reality an open plea for carloads of tourists and a suggestion that in coming to Bryson City they will somehow manage to escape from one another. No doubt there are those in Bryson City who would love to see it swell to the size of Gatlinburg, Tennessee, the overwhelmingly commercialized tourist mecca over across the Park—no matter that Bryson City's major selling points are the very virtues (the peaceful isolation, the wilderness sanctuary, the small-town charm) that Gatlinburg has chosen to prostitute. But since the Bryson City area is on the edge of the tourist belt, miles from the nearest interstate highway, it must be carefully sought out by vacationers for the attractions it offers: hiking, picnicking, white-water rafting, and above all, the natural splendors of the mountains.

I was not really surprised to hear Don Forrister speak one night of the spirituality he perceives in these mountains, for in them, I too experienced a rare communion with nature. Sitting on the porch of Forrister's mountain home after a twilight thunderstorm, I watched the fireflies painting in watercolor on a gigantic canvas, their speckled phosphorescent moments of light diffused and softened by the mist. I recalled a poem by William Cullen Bryant, "Thanatopsis," that I had been forced to memorize in high school long ago, but which was only now helping me to see and hear "the voice of gladness, the smile, the eloquence of beauty, the mild and healing sympathy" that is the lavish gift of Nature.

This natural richness must surely suffuse the lives of the inhabitants of these mountains and compensate somewhat for the economic poverty that pervades the county. The average per capita income in 1979 was $5,705, compared with the national average of $8,773.[6] In April 1982, when the national unemployment rate was 9.2 percent, Swain County's was a staggering 26.2.[7] But poverty in Swain County has a long history—which may be why, as some Bryson City townsfolk insisted to me, "folks here is poor, but they don't feel poor." One suggested that, because of a tradition of self-sufficiency—including vegetable gardening, canning, building one's own furniture and often one's own home—hard times in these hills are less painful than

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in the city or suburbs. Perhaps. It is a sociological truism that the poor have less to lose to a depression. But many from the middle class are also out of work in Swain County, and the testimony in a local newspaper article of several of the jobless, concerning their emotional shock and alienation, sounds like an echo from far-off Detroit or Akron.

Of the four thousand in Swain County's labor force who *are* employed, nearly half are either tradesmen or workers in furniture and clothing factories. (A blue-jeans factory closed in early 1982.) Most of the others work at some level of government or in service-related businesses, the motels, gas stations, cafes, and gift shops that cater to the tourist dollar. The tourist business is seasonal, of course, but still important to the Swain County economy.

THE CRAFT HERITAGE: AESTHETICS AND FUNCTIONALITY

The tourists are lured by the wilderness of the mountains, and once there, attempt to preserve their memories by purchasing souvenirs of the mountain culture. The countryside is speckled with craft gift shops—the River Wood Craft Shop, the One Feather Craft Shop, and (within a stone's throw of the pink-and-white Teddy Bear Motel) Miller's Groceries and Crafts. The shops contain tons of mass-produced bric-a-brac, but items handcrafted by the Cherokees and white mountaineers also abound—baskets, pottery, quilts, rugs. The genuine handiworks are a fundamental part of the Southern Appalachian heritage. Recently popularized in the series of *Foxfire* books, the crafts of the white Southern Appalachia Highlanders have evolved for generations since the arrival of the first pioneers in the 1790s and early 1800s. By considering their cultural artifacts, it is possible, I believe, to discern several qualities of life among these people. I will suggest only three.

The first, perhaps the most obvious, has already been mentioned. It is an almost totally *self-sufficient* life-style, demanded of a people kept apart from the rest of civilization by distance and even isolated from neighbors by a rudely intervening mountaintop. Once, in these hills, everything was handmade: cabin, furniture, clothing, utensils. Second, one senses the enormous *care* invested in these artifacts. It is surely a patient people who were (and are) willing to wash and straighten animal and vegetable fibers, to stretch, twist, and spin

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them, to dye and weave the yarn into cloth. Only someone inspired to create a thing of beauty and excellence could produce from that hard-earned cloth the intricately patterned Appalachian "Sunday" quilts. And that inspiration must surely have come, as did Bryant's, from the "various language" spoken by their natural surroundings. One senses a link between the aesthetic pleasure that must have pervaded the creation of these artifacts and the satisfaction derived from the beauty in these hills.

But ultimately, there is *pragmatism*—indeed, the traditional pragmatism of the American frontier. These early mountaineers were not artists in any full-blown technical sense; they were craftspeople. In their work, aesthetics was clearly subordinate to function. The generally harsh circumstances of their lives strongly suggested a utilitarian channel for release of any artistic tendencies: "Direct your need for the creation of beauty toward the things of survival." Thus their pride in a cabinet built or a basket woven must surely have sprung not only from an appealing form, a pleasing design, an interesting texture but also, and perhaps primarily, from the work's practical attributes, its strength, its durability, its general usefulness.

THE OFFICIAL VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION

One escape route from poverty in Swain County nowadays is through the production and sale of arts and crafts. The people of Swain County are aware of this fact, and a rationale for an arts program that rested on it would, it seems, be viewed quite sympathetically, for it would be the latest manifestation of the pragmatism that has informed this region (indeed, this country) for decades. The Swain County Arts Program is in fact strongly vocational. The program is funded by the federal government and administered by the North Carolina Vocational Education Department. Its official *raison d'être,* therefore, is to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to become commercial artists, artisans, and craftspeople.

Within the school, the thrust of the program is also seen as primarily vocational—Mr. Frizell, the school principal, for example, spoke of it strongly in those terms—and written documents support this notion. For example, in "Art," the Swain County High School Arts Program booklet prepared for a school accreditation process, it is stated unequivocally that "Crafts as a Vocation is an individualized

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program concerned with occupations in the crafts industry. (Craft as a Vocation is taken as Art II and Art III by graduates of Art I who so choose.) The greatest portion of time is spent in laboratory activities while increased emphasis is placed on developing skills for local crafts industries."[8]

Again, in the booklet's description of the Commercial Arts courses, one reads: "At least 50 percent of the allocated time for this class will be used in the lab or shop for hands-on experience, *illustrating their relevance to the work world* (italics added)." And why are the "basics"—color and line, design and layout, balance and proportion—taught in that course? "In order for the student to develop competencies relative to the occupation." Likewise, two of the major objectives of the Photography course (taken as Art III) are "to prepare individuals for gainful employment in occupations relating to photography" and "to become aware of sales potential and prepare and practice selling photographs."[9] And so it goes. One cannot escape an awareness of the program's official orientation.

The Roots of Vocationalism

This curricular pledge of allegiance to commerce is, of course, hardly novel—whether in the area of the arts or in terms of the overall agenda of the American School. Indeed, one of the first influential Americans to suggest that schools should pay serious heed to the needs of the marketplace was Benjamin Franklin. Franklin's utilitarian approach was embodied in his plans for an academy in which classical scholarship was to become a curricular bedfellow to subjects of a more commercial interest to the newly emerging middle class: natural science and its applications, agriculture, bookkeeping, the history of technology, and so on.

Franklin suggested that the study of art (especially drawing) be assigned a purpose in addition to developing creative expression, namely, as a useful tool for improving the design of the work of shipbuilders, engravers, cabinetmakers, and mechanics. Franklin's academy never became a reality, but his utilitarian notions of the general curriculum—and the place of art within it—were the beginning of a lasting trend. Schooling, especially on the secondary level, would gradually divest itself of a large portion of the classical curriculum, often in favor of subjects and approaches more vocationally oriented. Several years later there appeared perhaps the original ar-

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guments for actual course offerings of handcraft art, such as embroidery, quilting, drawing, painting, and needlework, in terms of an expanded economic opportunity. These were in the form of newspaper advertisements for the private "English" schools that, in the mid-eighteenth century, many in the middle-class favored over the stuffier Latin grammar schools; indeed, some of the logic in "Art" is reminiscent of such arguments.

But only in the last half of the nineteenth century was the marriage of art and industry in the school curriculum finally achieved. These were the years of robust industrial development and expansion, decades that witnessed the rise of American iron and steel, the expansion of the textile industry, and the growth in railroads and shipping that opened up both foreign and domestic markets for American goods. It was also, if we are to believe a bulletin of the U.S. Bureau of Education, a time of increased opportunity for artists willing to serve as handmaidens to the newly crowned lord of manufacturing:

> In addition to the increased competition arising from the steam-carriage, new and cheaper methods of manufacture and increased productiveness, another element of value has rapidly pervaded all manufacturers, an element in which the United States has been and is woefully deficient—the art element. The element of beauty is found to have pecuniary as well as aesthetic value. The training of the hand and of the eye which is given by drawing is found to be of the greatest advantage to the worker in many occupations and is rapidly becoming indispensable. This training is of value to all the children and offers to girls as well as boys opportunity for useful and remunerative occupations, for drawing in the public school is not to be taught as mere "accomplishment." The end sought is not to enable the scholar to draw a pretty picture, but to so train the hand and eye that he may be better fitted to become a bread-winner.[10]

Another indication of the importance of art training for industry during this time was the intense lobbying by leading industrialists in Massachusetts to ensure passage into law, in 1870, a proposal requiring all cities with a population exceeding ten thousand to provide art instruction to teenaged boys.[11]

The last half of the nineteenth century was thus the heyday of the vocational rationale for the teaching of drawing and the crafts in the public school. John Dewey and the Progressive Education movement finally provided a rationale for the fine arts as an activity central to the educational process, and both the justifications for, and the meth-

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ods in, courses of the fine arts and the practical (or industrial) arts grew more disparate, as indeed they are today.

In Swain County, according to Frizell, "it was not easy to get the crafts and commercial art into the vocational program" back in 1973. The school administration decided to make the attempt when the state-funded arts teacher/counselor retired. The intercession of the state's Superintendent of Public Instruction was required, but the Swain County Commercial Arts and Crafts program was finally accepted by the state Vocational Education Department. Today, only one other such program in North Carolina—a strongly craft-oriented one at Robinsville—also receives funding through the state from the federal government.

The Swain program must be resubmitted every year, with projections of courses to be taught and numbers of students, along with follow-up studies of program graduates. This last process is crucial, for the survival of the program depends in large measure on the percentages of Art III graduates who choose to pursue arts or crafts, or both, as a vocation or as a major in a technical school or four-year college. The required percentage fluctuates, but according to Alice Lance, the school's vocational guidance counselor, it usually hovers around 50 percent. "It is totally up to the Vocational Education Department," she said. "They go by the numbers. . . . What's saving the program is that the students have been using . . . [their arts and crafts training], . . . but it's scary."

This number seems astonishingly high, especially considering the traditional disinclination of the region's people toward higher education, and it stands as testimony to Forrister's profound influence on the career choices of his students. So, despite its slightly tenuous future status, the program has indeed proved successful in terms of its official mandate. And while that accomplishment itself is interesting, there are, I believe, even more compelling achievements in the Swain County High School Arts Program. To consider those, we need to look closer at the program in action.

NONVOCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF THE ARTS PROGRAM

There are really three "arts-and-crafts" rooms presided over by Don Forrister. The main classroom is located, fittingly, in the school's Vocational wing, whereas to reach the other two—the pho-

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tography darkroom and the weaving room—requires considerable transit through those right-angled corridors. Forrister's classroom is L-shaped (the lap of the L is an adjoining arts material storeroom), its angularity somewhat softened by the layers of student crafts and artwork that cover the horizontal surfaces and cushion the walls. Entering this room is like exiting from the building: one leaves the nowhere-land of the school plant and slips back into Appalachian hill country. The sense of place returns, thanks largely to the local flavor of objects like the baskets woven of birch twigs, the large, intricately designed Sunday quilt, and the drawings of hill country still lifes. Many of these exhibit the same blend of the aesthetic and the functional seen in the artifacts of the Southern Highlands pioneers.

And the longer one remains, the stronger wafts the aroma of the hills, not only in the distinctive accents of the students, but also in their open and friendly demeanor, a reflection of their elders on the sidewalks of Bryson City. And certainly, the perseverance and care of the students as they tussle with their materials are the qualities one can see fossilized in the artifacts of the mountain pioneers. Does the same fuel that fired the engines of the mountain craftsmen move these students in Don Forrister's classroom? Is it indeed a struggle for economic survival that motivates them? Are the scarlet threads woven into that rug merely to supply a tangential beauty, placed there primarily to catch the eye and only secondarily to please it—not as an end in itself, but as a means of ringing the cash register?

Just what does motivate these teenagers? It is an important question, because the answer can provide a clue to the *educational* meaning and significance of the program's outcomes—the character of its impact on the lives of these students. Having spent only four days in the school, I will avoid pronouncements, and instead share my reasons for some strong suspicions. They are based on observations of student comportment, on their informal comments, on mass "whole class" discussions over which I presided, and on interviews with individual students.

An Eclecticism of Purpose

First, it is apparent that many different motives coexist here; as in most human endeavors, there are a variety of prevailing causes and reasons for actions. There is indeed a degree of the career/economic/

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commercial incentive, although the amount seems startlingly small in light of the program's stated intentions and sources of funding. Consider, for example, the case of Robert, the senior voted "most talented in art" by the graduating class, an adolescent whose sensitive and technically accomplished drawings are an emphatic testimony to that talent, and whose family (according to Forrister) is of extremely modest means. I was quite moved by one of Robert's drawings and was interested in acquiring it, but his refusal to sell it was absolute: "I like to keep all of my drawings." Don Forrister assured me that this disinclination to part with their work, even for money, is quite common among his students—and their parents. Only a few of them (including the craftspeople) will merchandise their handiworks. More often, the creations will either adorn their homes or become gifts, providing lasting pleasure to themselves, their kin, and friends.

And their plans for future employment? The current crop of upperclassmen appear to fit the pattern of the past: of the fourteen I surveyed, eight expressed an intention to work at an arts- or crafts-related job. For some, following in the paths of former students like John Herrin, a truck driver who "moonlights" in macrame, crafts may provide a supplementary income. But for the majority of Forrister's students, different motives seem to dominate. Their interest in arts and crafts is not based primarily on the acquisition of a salable skill. Here is the question I posed to an assembly of sixteen Arts II and III students: "Suppose it were impossible to use what you have learned in this class in terms of a job. Would you still have taken this class, and would you still enjoy it as much?" A show of hands indicated a nearly unanimous affirmative response.

So while the image—among much of the Swain County public, members of the school administration and faculty, and the distant bureaucrats in Raleigh and Washington who administer and fund the program—may be of students learning to draw and weave for the primary intention of acquiring future economic self-sufficiency, reality begs to differ: the economic imperative, the prevailing practicality of their ancestors, is, for most of these students, clearly subordinate to motives more compelling. What are they?

A Personal Pride

One motive concerns a personal pride in their accomplishments. There are several facets to this pride, including a degree of vanity

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from the attention their talents attract. Occasionally, a sense of self-importance could be detected among some of Forrister's senior students, an awareness of a kind of privileged status usually associated with talented athletes or found among high-school thespians backstage before the senior play. This status, as far as I could tell, was certainly not flaunted—and part of it might be explained by the fact that so many of Forrister's senior students were already part of, in Philip Cusick's term, the school's "power clique."[12] But this status was also derived from the recognition of, and admiration for, their many awards and honors, which the students (as they readily admit) welcome. The elixir of victory is heady stuff; the scent from a drop or two can apparently provide the momentum for many a painstaking and time-consuming project. This attention and excitement may be particularly impressive to the large percentage of Forrister's students who are, according to Lance, less than academically able in other subjects. Can we imagine the impact on the psyche of an eleventh-grader who, after years of frustration, boredom, and perhaps even derision in math and English classes, is suddenly flown to New York to receive a national award for his drawings?

Nevertheless, many junior and senior students insisted to me that visions of plane trips to exotic locations, or even the regional trophies and blue ribbons, did not lure them into Art I. As freshmen or sophomores, they could not imagine that they might possess such talent. Just a few years later, however, the pride in creating—in their words—a thing of excellence, or more accurately, the accolades received from those creations, does seem to explain partially the students' reluctance to sell them.

An "Expression of Their Art"

But many students are unwilling to part with their "lesser" works as well. Could this perhaps indicate a more intrinsic satisfaction in their creation? In that regard, a closer inspection of "Art" reveals this beguiling passage:

> A great many people work at crafts as a hobby or avocation and a growing number are becoming craftsmen and producing crafts as a vocation. For some, craft work is an "alternative" vocation which the craftsmen prefer above the nine-to-five job. For others, it is their sub-occupation and expression of their art for which the benefits can seldom be calculated in dollars and cents.[13]

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A priceless "expression of their art"? Is there really a nonvocational incentive producing outcomes infinitely more valuable when measured with the kind of economic yardstick implied in the program rationale? The phrase suggests a purpose more concerned with the needs and development of the individual, as opposed to an exploitation of the needs of the marketplace. There are, of course, many rationales for aesthetic education that pertain to the personal well-being of the individual, such as the development of artistic talent, aesthetic appreciation, the therapeutic value of the artistic process, and so on. "Expression of their art," in the context used here, however, inspires two thoughts: first, it is reminiscent of the aesthetic pleasure that was an important by-product of the time-honored process of craftsmaking in these hills; second, it is a phrase that evokes a particular branch of art theory, expressivism. The theorists of expressivism see art as an embodiment of the artist's inward feelings and images into an objective, outward "expressive" form. They often speak of a subjective inner life—"the life of feeling," as Susanne Langer puts it—and the aim of art, in their view, is to promote insight into and understanding of this inner realm. As Wordsworth saw it, art is "emotion recollected in tranquility." But according to the expressivists, recollection is also a publication: a work of art is a transmutation of personal feelings and imagery into a unique sensible form—an objectification of the subjective. Objects of art, said Langer, articulate and present "ideas of feelings" for our contemplation.[14]

But are we not placing an overwhelming burden on the shoulders of a single phrase in a single paragraph in a single program booklet? Is the development of the students' creative self-expression really a significant feature of the daily activities in Forrister's classes? The evidence, it appears, leans strongly toward the affirmative, especially for the more advanced students.

According to Forrister, the Art I students are more interested in functional items, or in decorating things to be used—like the silk screen designs for their tee shirts. With maturity, however, expressing oneself through the creative process also becomes important: in the private conversations I had with senior students, several told me of how they inform their materials with "a part of" themselves. Perhaps most telling was a discussion with an articulate young man, son of a Baptist minister. Jim, an Art III student, was pursuing the art of "papermaking," a process of sifting pulp through a wire screen,

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painting it with colors, often including other materials such as straw, newspaper photos, and so on, for a collage effect. In one sensitive piece, a photo of a pensive old woman in a rocking chair sits among brooding clouds of purple, green, and yellow-grey.

TOM: Why do you like papermaking?

JIM: I like to be able to . . . it's not so defined. I like the freedom of it more than anything.

TOM: What do you mean by "it's not so defined"—that you can make abstract sorts of things?

JIM: Yeah, like lots of times you'll make something that you're not sure why you're doing it, but when it gets finished, you really like it.

TOM: When you do your papermaking, do you ever think, "Well, that has a certain feeling to it," . . . like it's expressing an emotion?

JIM: Oh yeah, I think it depends on when I come into class, what kind of mood I'm in. I think that comes out in some of my work.

TOM: Like, for example, the one that you're doing now of the old woman. What kind of feelings does that express?

JIM: Kind of a lost feeling. You see, I graduate in about a week, . . . and I feel kinda worried about it. I guess that's coming out in it. At least I think so.

TOM: You probably wouldn't have done that one . . .

JIM: Earlier on? No, I wouldn't have . . .

TOM: When was the first time you realized [you were expressing yourself through your art]?

JIM: Probably sometime last year when I was a junior.

TOM: But in Art I, it . . . was just techniques?

JIM: Yeah.

TOM: Do you think other art students . . . also express themselves like that?

JIM: Oh yeah, a lot of them . . . 'cause basically you [are allowed in Forrister's class] to do what you want to.

By the freedom "to do what you want," I do not believe that Jim meant the license to scratch and scrawl angrily on a drawing pad, or, in high spirits, splash paint randomly on a canvas. Such behavior is only primitively "expressive"; it is *not* artistic expression. In Forrister's class, the individual student is preeminent, but the individualism that develops there has a distinctly Deweyan cast to it. In lieu of a mindless outpouring of unbridled emotion, there is a considered channeling of impulses into purposeful actions. The student's artistic

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activity is in fact comprised of careful negotiations with the materials, ardent attempts to create forms that communicate ideas and images. Degrees of success vary, of course, but in this process, qualitative forms of intelligence can clearly develop.

"Working Hard" at Self-Expression

Several students described the process of self-expression as "fulfilling" and "enjoyable," but also insisted that it was "hard work." No question that I asked of Forrister's class was greeted with more chuckles of affirmation than this one: "Is art as hard a subject as the others you take?" Some admitted to electing Art I with hopes of coasting through with minimal effort. They apparently harbored a notion quite common in our society, the one that associates crafts like basket weaving with extremely low rates of mental taxation. But to their astonishment, these students soon found Art I, in their own words, "harder than other subjects," because they had not anticipated a "striving for perfection." Who, after all, would have expected this newfound desire to "make your next project better than your last"?

But in Forrister's class, the nature of the "work" is different from the Calvinistic notion of work implied in Weber's famous critique of the Protestant ethic, the conception that has prevailed in America's schools for centuries and that remains today the image of educational virtue held by parents, schoolteachers and administrators (including many at Swain), and much of the general public. Such "work" demands a deferment of present interests and needs for a vision of future rewards, the imposition of self-discipline to withstand the tedium of—in today's educational lingo—the "time on task." The result is said to be the development of certain personal attributes, as noted in this description of the weaving process of the mountaineers by Frances Goodrich, an early twentieth century preservationist of the hill country artifacts: "In the younger women who were learning to weave and keeping at it, I would see the growth of character. A slack, twisted person cannot make a success as a weaver of coverlets. Patience and perseverance are of the first necessity, and the exercise of these strengthens the fibers of the soul."[15]

Patience and perseverance are indeed personal qualities helpful in overcoming the monotony of the production phase of the weaving process (or the boredom of the assembly line), for further implied in

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this notion of work is the mindless replication of a prototype—and thus a personal distancing, an alienation from the process. Indeed, any intellectual engagement with one's materials could be harmful to the faithful reproduction of the prototype. What is needed, instead, is skill in copying precisely—and in the arts and crafts, the "training of the mind and eye," as that U.S. Bureau of Education Bulletin puts it, might provide such skill.

It is not surprising that during the late 1800s—the period of maximum coziness between art education and industry—this image of work was most clearly reflected in the methodology of art instruction. The methods originated, as did the Industrial Revolution, in Great Britain. The British National Course of Art Instruction (or the Cole System, after Henry Cole, head of the South Kensington Training School for Art Masters) was transported to the United States, and its aim was, indeed, to train students manually in copying. According to Stuart McDonald,

> Exact uniformity was insured by the National Course of Instruction, each of which had several stages, the sum of which comprised the twenty-three Stages of Instruction. The Stages . . . were mechanical steps to the acquisition of "hand-power." Twenty-one were successive exercises in copying . . . intended . . . to be strictly initiated until Stages 22 and 23 were reached—a most unlikely eventuality.[16]

This manual training approach to drawing was brought to America by another Englishman, Walter Smith, and soon the art instruction in American schools was pervaded by these alienating exercises of meticulous reproduction of master designs.

The activities in Forrister's class, however, provide a stark contrast with the Cole System. Technique is indeed mastered there, but as a means to a greater goal rather than as an end in itself. And the students do seem to be "working," but in a sense different from that implied in the Protestant ethic. Patience is certainly present, but it often seems less imposed than arising from a more immediate gratification. The effort appears to be generated from within the activities themselves, and directed toward an original transformation of the ideas and experiences of the individual student.

One can observe in this process a dialogue between the student and the materials being shaped, a qualitative problem-solving process in which the student/worker/artist struggles with possibilities, ten-

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tatively moves on the material, encounters resistance, and manipulates the component parts. For example, at one point in "working" on his paper collage, Jim incorporated some torn pieces of white paper above the head of the woman in the rocking chair, hoping to achieve a daydreaming effect. The "product," however, spoke back to him: "Perhaps too bright, distracting the eye from the central figure." Jim listened, reconsidered, added a more yellowish cast that reflected the woman's sallow facial tones, and that skirmish ended successfully.

Thus was the aesthetic tension between creator and creation resolved, as Jim used his "freedom" to "work hard" at portraying his own distinctive ideas, feelings, values, and ends-in-view. Aestheticians are prone to words like "authenticity," "self-actualizing," "liberating," and "emancipating" in describing the effects of this creative process. It is a process that celebrates individual growth, as the student wrestles with the materials in order to create meaning, to make sense of his life.

Expressiveness in Crafts

The result of this process—a result Maxine Greene has called the "recovery of the self"[17]—is a far cry from what one might expect in a vocationally oriented arts program, especially considering those of an earlier day. Nevertheless, this kind of "personal unfolding" occurs not only in the more obviously artistic endeavors of Forrister's students, but sometimes in their craftsmaking as well. There are many similarities in the processes: the same attitude of caring, the personal attachment to their products, the pleasure in their creation. In craft production, of course, the intended function or use of the object imposes limitations on shape and form. Some aestheticians would disqualify most crafts from membership in the realm of fine art on this basis: they are not (in Langer's term) "virtual objects," objects whose only function is to "create a sheer vision, a datum that is nothing but pure perceptual form."[18]

Yet it is clear that craftsmaking can involve aesthetic judgments, as argued by Edward Mattil, who in this passage could have been speaking of the early Southern Highlanders:

> We must assume that the earliest tools and utensils of man were restricted to the considerations of utility. As their efficiency improved, there was a steady

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evolution of form. In any situation where people were first required to produce the necessities of life by hand, the useful concern was of prime importance and as long as impoverished or stringent conditions continued, the art quality of the object rarely exceeded the functional design of the object. However, as soon as time and skill permitted, the craftsman was fairly sure to elaborate or decorate his objects and it was at this point in man's development where the matter of choice entered into the picture. For example, when man became able to create a variety of clay bowls, each good for holding grain or water, he found himself engaged in the process of making judgments—practical *and* aesthetic—in determining form and decoration.[19]

Today's Swain County High School students also often create meaning in their crafts, arranging elements of color, form, and texture into imaginative relationships that communicate feelings. Indeed, they told me so: when I asked the assemblage of advanced students to divide into two groups—art students to the right, craftspeople to the left—no one moved. There was near unanimous insistence that any arts/crafts dichotomy would be an unimportant one. The students whom I had observed "working" at crafts like weaving, quilting, and batik-making clearly perceived themselves as "doing art." Indeed, distressed by their inability to respond effectively to the question in a group setting, two students sought me out later for private discussions, and one of them said that while some minor distinctions may exist, nevertheless, there is "art in crafts," and that she was able to express her emotions especially in the design phase of her weaving. (I was able to extract an admission that in the production phase, there was some "work" required, as Frances Goodrich has assured us, but even that process was often filled with the excitement of seeing one's design "come to life" with one's personal qualities placed in it.)

Interestingly, the Arts Program booklet suggests that it is those once tangential, individually produced aesthetic qualities that today provide the craft products with their functional value:

> In our age of mass production where a certain "sameness" marks most products, there is a growth market for goods that are unique and distinctive. The craftsman who can design and produce articles that have aesthetic value and bring distinction to their owners, have access to a market with which mass production cannot compete.[20]

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Thus the "functional" value of today's craft objects may be defined less by their usability than by their ability to persuade a prospective purchaser visually. The mountain folk of yore could have survived the winter under an ugly quilt, but today's Appalachian craftsmen must beware the frigidity of the uninterested consumer.

Recall, however, that Forrister's students are generally not interested in selling their wares, and can therefore give freer range to their own personal aesthetic values in the construction of their objects. Individual self-expression thus seems central not only to the activities of Forrister's future artists but to the craftsmaking as well, and that is surely one of the sources of a profound satisfaction that attracts them to Don Forrister's class.

Here, then, is what we have learned thus far about the Swain program: that there exists within the program major nonvocationally related features, including motivational factors such as a thirst for self-esteem and a need for self-expression; and that these incentives result in program outcomes that are officially unsanctioned and therefore officially ancillary, but that are of central importance to a preponderance of the students.

These findings are especially intriguing when viewed in light of a particular ongoing dialogue among some educationists. Radical critics of schooling have long portrayed schools as extensions of the modern technocratic state, as agencies ideologically committed to the corporate social order. Through both the overt and hidden curriculum, it is said, the institution of the school transmits the dominant cultural system. Schooling thus promotes a subversion of individuality in favor of attitudes and a world view that further the mechanistic purposes of business and industry. In the rather pessimistic critique of some of the radical determinists, any piecemeal reform of this monolithic apparatus of control is extremely problematical. Teachers in particular are seen as ineffective change agents, enmeshed as they are in the technocratic superstructure of the school.

The official vocational rationale of the Swain program would seem to pay homage to this point of view, but the program in action suggests the possibility of a more complex and attractive model. Here, classroom events and activities that reflected the divergent values of an individual teacher seemed to produce liberating rather than stultifying experiences. To elucidate this further, we turn now to the history of the program and the role of its chief architect.

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AN APPALACHIAN ARTIST DESIGNS AN ARTS PROGRAM

Donald Forrister knows these hills and their people, for he is one of them. Now a tall, slim, thirty-three-year-old, he was born and raised in Appalachia and attended college at Western Carolina University, and reflections of those qualities found in the mountain artifacts, described earlier in this essay, are clearly visible in Forrister's personality. There is, for example, his strong self-reliance and independence of thought and action. These manifest themselves in a variety of ways, including personal appearance. The beard and long hair of a couple of years ago were perhaps for some of the teachers an unwanted reminder of the stereotypical mountaineer, and helped to solidify Forrister's image among them (at least according to some students) as something of a "weirdo." The beard, neatly trimmed, remains today, but Forrister's consistent casualness of dress, as well as his general life-style and values, are reminiscent of the "back-to-nature" movement among middle-class youth in the late sixties and early seventies. (The difference may simply be that Forrister never left.)

But his independence can be seen in other ways as well. He refuses to gossip and is intentionally uninformed about the politics within the faculty and administration. Though Forrister does not seem disliked by other faculty members, some may perhaps mistake his aloofness for disdain. For example, he often lunches with students in the cafeteria rather than with his peers—only a slight breach of the etiquette of collegiality, but surely a habit (again, according to students) deemed irregular by some teachers. These qualities of independence and a loose definition of his role status are greatly admired by some of Forrister's students and seem instrumental in gaining their trust and respect.

"Hardworking" is the trait cited most often by Swain teachers and administrators, and a large measure of his success is owing to his enormous investment of time and energy in the program. In class he is a blur of movement from student to student for seven class periods a day, and even, during some periods, from classroom to weaving room to darkroom. On closer inspection, the blur becomes a mosaic made up of individual exchanges between Forrister and students—such as a minicritique of a choice of subjects, a quick nod of affirmation concerning a color mixture, or a one-on-one demonstration of a

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new technique. An arts course consists of an untold number of such interactions, each a piece of an emerging pattern. And Forrister's dedication extends well beyond the school grounds and class time. He can be found on weekends escorting a group of students to an art exhibit in Asheville, consulting with an individual student on a photographic project, and so on.

The students prefer to use the word *caring* to describe this "hard work." But the latter, it seems to me, is simply a manifestation of the former, just as the perseverance of the early spinners and weavers followed on their desire for beautiful coverlets and quilts. That Forrister does indeed care very deeply about his program was obvious. One anecdote in particular highlights this. In attendance at a ceremony honoring the Arts program was the mother of a former Swain student, who had won a $10,000 scholarship to a prestigious art institute—thanks, she said, to "that man. And when we telephoned him to tell him the news, do you know what he did?" she asked. "He cried."

Forrister admits to "getting emotional" whenever a student creates a particularly beautiful work. That emotionality is touching, of course, but it is important mainly insofar as it illuminates what lies at the heart of the Swain County success story: the simple but intense mission of a single teacher to enhance the lives of his students through art. And it is a cause that was achieved not only through the unswerving dedication of that one man, but by his shrewd intelligence as well.

Which brings us to our final commonality between the character of the Appalachian people generally and Don Forrister in particular: a deep-seated pragmatism. We saw that pragmatism in the hill folks' ingenious combinations of the useful and the beautiful in the utensils of everyday living. Forrister's work of art is his program, and his methods for assuring not only its survival, but also its flourishing, in terms of its own values and definition of "success," are also pragmatic.

Part of what Forrister did was to make the program famous. This high visibility was achieved through active participation in a wide variety of arts-and-crafts contests. Of course, the students' talents won the awards, and the incentive produced by recognition was developed in the classroom through the teaching process I have already described. But Forrister also played a leading role in the selection of

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student work for entrance in competitions, a tactic that often resulted in a legitimation of his expertise. One senior described to me the growth of his respect for Forrister's judgment:

> I would want to enter one of my drawings in a contest, and [he] would say, "Why don't we try this other one," because he thought it was better. And he would tell me why he liked it more. And I would say, "Well, OK." And . . . when *he* chose the ones to put in [the contest], I would win [an award], and when *I* chose which ones, I wouldn't. . . . A lot of the time that happened. . . . So I figured he must really know what he's doing.

Forrister's primary aim in emphasizing competitions, I am convinced, was to heighten student interest in art, not to increase the visibility of the program. Furthermore, I believe him when he says that his students' career decisions are of secondary importance to him. Nevertheless, a significant side effect was also spawned by these two measures of success. Both the obvious vocational influence and especially the contest results greatly impressed many parents and the school's administrators. The regional and even national recognition stirred local pride and, according to Lance, has even been noticed in Raleigh. As a result, Forrister had acquired a little of the aura of a winning football coach. His job certainly seems secure: Frizell has stated that, even if the vocational funds were slashed, "we would find the money to keep Forrister here."

Such a change in funding sources would probably increase Forrister's autonomy, and a few changes might ensue (such as the inclusion of "nonvocational" art forms like painting). But these should be minimal, since Forrister already possesses the freedom to pursue his own aspirations under the existing arrangements, freedom that seems less a result of forethought than of fortune. This is how it came about. During the 1970s, said Forrister, a regional representative from the State Vocational Education Department would visit his classes to monitor the orientation of his pedagogical methods and choice of curricular content. "For one or two years I wouldn't hear anything, and then a new person would take over [in the regional office], and complain about my emphasis, and I would have to concentrate on commercial art, and lead them more into the crafts."

In the last three or four years, however, Forrister says that he has acquired greater latitude in his choice of content and methods, with more emphasis on generating intrinsic interest and less on vocational. What has brought this about? A "reduction in force," a decrease in

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the staffing of the regional office, which has forced the Vocational Department to rely on a less direct, more quantitative, and less informative program-evaluation procedure. I have only Forrister's word for this shift in emphasis, but the irony in such an occurrence would be rich indeed. Is there any other example of a budget cut resulting in the enhancement of artistic self-expression in students? I know of none.

Thus have the seeds sown by Forrister sprouted in the cracks of a concrete technocracy. The success of his efforts belies any notion that schools are necessarily the kinds of "total institutions" posited by some of the radical critics. Indeed, as institutions become more complex and cumbersome, their management and the monitoring of official mandates tend to become more problematical. Corporate hegemony tends to diminish, while individual prerogative is enhanced.

So while Forrister's actions may in some respects resemble the kind of "resistance" in educational institutions described by Jean Anyon and others[21]—that is, an individual agent's direct contestation of the systematic imposition of the technocratic will—a metaphor less antagonistic in tone seems more appropriate, one that suggests an accommodation of aims from a variety of sources. Direct contestation is not necessary in an organizational arrangement whose unwieldiness allows for a peaceful coexistence between formally sanctioned aspirations and those held by individuals charged with conduct of the program.

Note that in the Swain County program, official criteria are indeed being met. The development of individual self-expression has not been accomplished at the expense of the mandated vocational outcomes. On the other hand, neither has Forrister allowed the vocational imperatives to overwhelm the curricular decision-making and the pedagogical processes—even though compromises (already documented) were sometimes necessary. Even early in the program's history, Forrister certainly never resorted to any methods even vaguely resembling the essentially anaesthetic Cole System of training students. He has shown us that preparing students for an occupation in the arts and crafts does not today require an alienating, spiritually exhausting regimen of mindless exercises. Indeed, evidence suggests that the personal rewards flowing from creative activities often encourage a lasting devotion to the artistic process and therefore an inclination toward an arts- or crafts-related career. And it seems fit-

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ting to learn this from a native of the Southern Highlands, where functionality and aesthetic pleasure have traditionally cohabited within the arts and crafts.

ON EFFECTIVELY ARGUING FOR THE ARTS

This demonstration of a successful eclecticism of purpose has, I believe, important implications for the manner in which those of us close to the arts argue for their inclusion in the curriculum. Too often we display—as has, for example, Jacques Barzun[22]—a tendency to dismiss the necessity of justifications that are less "rudimentary" than those involving self-expression and aesthetic appreciation. The sources of this tendency are surely noble: an acute awareness of the intense satisfaction to be derived from the aesthetic experience and a desire to enhance the capacity of members of the younger generation for engaging in such experiences. Such an acquisition might even lead, as Harry Broudy has hoped, to "the good life, . . . the kind of life that finds its expressions in the so-called good works of art."[23] I would suggest, however, that it is an overreliance on the "art-for-art's sake" arguments that has, regardless of their intrinsic validity, partially contributed to the sadly consistent relegation of the arts to the curricular caboose. Despite the lip service sometimes paid to the arts, the American public (including legislators and many educators) obviously does not share our devotion to a belief in their intrinsic worth. Perhaps a generally low level of aesthetic literacy prevents a sizable number from appreciating the profundity of the life-enhancing capacities of the arts; perhaps not. At any rate, the survival of school arts programs may, especially in an era of economic stringency, require emphasis of rationales more sensitive to the fundamentally pragmatic character of the American people.

How much, for example, would the people of Swain County value a program—even an award-winning program—that served, in their eyes, no "useful" purpose? Even in this region steeped in a tradition of folk art, would there be widespread and sustained enthusiasm for a program that educated solely for "worthy leisure time activities" or "aesthetic appreciation"? My hunch is that the American-style pragmatism of these economically distressed people would ultimately deem such a program frivolous and of low priority.

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The Swain County example therefore suggests the judicious employment of *additional* arguments, pragmatic ones that present the arts as instrumental in, and indeed as fundamentally essential to, the development of competent individuals capable of functioning in our society. It is beyond the scope of this essay to identify and articulate all such rationales, but we should note that they include others besides the obvious career-education justifications.

One particularly intriguing and, I believe, potentially fruitful argument sees the growth of aesthetic awareness as fundamental to the development of the "basic skills" of reading and writing. According to Elliot Eisner, there exist a great many forms of public representation of privately held concepts and images. We need to increase the literacy of students in a variety of these forms by developing their aesthetic awareness and artistic expression and, therefore, a more sophisticated perceptual system, one with greater power for the imaginative perception of qualitative relationships among empirical phenomena. This is important because

> information developed out of a highly differentiated perceptual system can then be used as content for a form of representation, often in a form other than that in which the information was initially acquired. For example, consider the writer of literature. To be able to write, the writer must have something to write about. To have something to write about, the writer must be able to "read" the environment in which he lives. He must become aware of qualities of gesture and nuances of voices, he must have subtlety of vision. . . . For those who are unable to see, or to hear, or to taste, or to smell, the content of literature will be little more than something that other people enjoy. School programs that neglect developing the child's literacy in forms of representation that sharpen the senses ultimately deprive the student of the very content he needs to use well the skills of reading and writing.[24]

I wish to stress that I am not advocating a total abandonment of those rationales that point to the intrinsic delightfulness of the aesthetic experience, or that emphasize personal growth and self-expression—especially for audiences that seem, to any degree, potentially receptive of such arguments. But the approaches that emphasize the instrumental value of the study of art would seem to hold greater potential for persuading a skeptical and frugal American public (and American educators, who should already know better) that the arts are indeed worthy members of the curriculum household.

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Finally, regardless of justifications engaged in, and the program's stated objectives, once a program is in place, the successful attainment of the truly fundamental aim of art education—the intellectual and emotional growth of the individual—will obviously occur only through the "hard work," the dedication, the caring, the talent, and the intelligence of those in charge. Don Forrister has exhibited these qualities in fashioning a program that, although undergirded by a utilitarian rationale, nevertheless results in the flourishing of that fundamental aesthetic purpose; a program which reveals that, while caution is certainly in order, such rationales no longer need give us pause.

The discovery of that truth has been, for me, both instructive and inspirational. Indeed, I will remember that discovery—as I will the artifacts of the pioneers of the Southern Highlands and those of their descendants, the students of Swain County High School—as, itself, a thing of general usefulness and of a simultaneously singular beauty.

ENDNOTES

[1]Aristotle, "Politics, Book 8," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* edited by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 1308.

[2]Quoted in *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands,* by Allen H. Eaton (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1937), p. 4.

[3]Jerome J. Hausman, "The Plastic Arts, History of Art and Design—Three Currents toward Identifying Content for Art Education," in *Concepts in Art and Education: An Anthology of Current Issues,* edited by George Pappas (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 14.

[4]*Smoky Mountain Tourist News,* Bryson City, North Carolina, May 21, 1982, p. 8.

[5]Ibid.

[6]"County Development Information for Swain County," Center for Improving Mountain Living, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina, August 1981, p. 4.

[7]"Swain Jobless Rate Climbs," *Asheville Citizen,* Asheville, North Carolina, April 1982, p. 2.

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[10]Quoted by Elliot W. Eisner and David W. Ecker, "Some Historical Developments in Art Education," in *Concepts in Art and Education,* p. 14.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Philip Cusick, *Inside High School: The Students' World* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), p. 153.

[13]Forrister and McKinney, "Art," p. 1.

[14]Susanne Langer, *Problems of Art* (New York: Scribner's, 1957).

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[15]Wilma Dykeman and Jim Stokely, *Highland Homeland: The People of the Great Smokies,* Division of Publications, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 107.

[16]Stuart Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (New York: American Elsevier Publishing Company, 1970), p. 188.

[17]Maxine Greene, "Teaching for Aesthetic Experience," in *Toward an Aesthetic Education,* A Report of an Institute, sponsored by CEMREL, Inc., Music Educators National Conference (Washington, D.C.: 1970), p. 41.

[18]Langer, *Problems of Art,* p. 32.

[19]Edward Mattil, *Meaning in Crafts* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 3.

[20]Forrister and McKinney, "Art," p. 1.

[21]See, for example, the following papers presented at the symposium "Resistance in Education," at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York, 1982: Jean Anyon, "Aspects of Resistance by Working Class and Affluent Fifth Grade Girls to Traditional Sex-role Demands"; Nancy King, "Children's Play as a Form of Resistance to the Classroom"; Janet Miller, "Resistance of Women Academics to Curricular and Administrative Discrimination in Higher Education."

[22]Jacques Barzun, "Art and Educational Inflation," in *Art in Basic Education,* Occasional Paper 25, Council for Basic Education, Washington, D.C., p. 9.

[23]Harry S. Broudy, "Some Duties of an Educational Aesthetics," *Educational Theory* 1 (November 1951): 192.

[24]Elliot W. Eisner, *Cognition and Curriculum: A Basis for Deciding What to Teach* (New York: Longman, 1982), pp. 76-77.

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Marianne Amarel

An Education for Commercial Artists

THE HIGH SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN sits on a choice piece of real estate in Manhattan's silk-stocking district. An example of enlightened industrial architecture, 1930s style, the seven-story modular building merges into the surrounding urban patchwork. In a landscape of narrow brownstones flanked by elegant apartment towers, street level establishments house dog-grooming parlors, offer bagels baked on the premises, display collections of antique buttons and glass paperweights—purveying the essential goods and services well-heeled East-Siders have come to expect.

The camouflage provided by this pastiche gives way twice daily, when the sidewalk of A&D is swept by tides of youngsters as they arrive in the morning and disperse in the afternoon. Conspicuous by their age and color in this largely adult and overwhelmingly white neighborhood, the students announce the building's identity—a public school with a fair representation of its catchment area, the five boroughs of New York City.

For a number of students, coming to A&D is a significant journey. Robert, a senior headed for Howard University in the fall, recalls the time he first faced the trip from Co-Op City, a self-contained housing complex in the Bronx:

> I thought I would take the express bus to school, but my mother couldn't afford the fare, so I had to come by subway. It was the first time I did that, and I was scared. I did a lot of things for the first time then. But I wanted to go out of my neighborhood. I saw too many of my friends get trapped there. A lot of my friends still don't know how to use the train . . . have never been to Manhattan.

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A&D is not a neighborhood school. Whatever images that ideal evokes, A&D is unlikely to reflect them. Yet, the school represents an ideal of another kind, a vocational school for the commercial arts located within walking distance of some of the world's great museums, art galleries, and the studios of New York's reputed graphic designers. This prosperous and safe environment stands in striking contrast to the surroundings of the city's prestigious specialized high schools—Music and Art, and Bronx Science—which are in areas fraught with urban peril, requiring effort and vigilance to ensure the safety of students and to reassure their mostly middle-class parents. And although one could make too much of the school's uncommon location, it would be remiss to make light of it. To a degree, A&D's character has been shaped by it, both in the way the opportunities it presents have been realized and in the way some have been forfeited.

A&D's distinction does not rest on its location alone. In the brochures describing it, the school's uniqueness is much advertised; indeed, it is the single public high school in the country devoted to the visual arts, charged specifically to ready its graduates for entry-level jobs in the trade.

Admission to the school hinges on the strength of the applicant's ability to draw. Each December, upwards of four thousand applicants submit portfolios of a dozen or more works and take a performance exam (a life drawing, a sketch from memory, and a design task) to compete for the six to seven hundred openings in ninth and tenth grade. This massive screening is undertaken by the art faculty, the final arbiters of admission. Screening for academic performance, however, is perfunctory. All junior high-school graduates may be admitted. Thus, A&D students obviously span a broad spectrum of academic abilities and interests.

Despite the rigorous selection process—at least as far as drawing ability is concerned—the student body mirrors, quite faithfully, the ethnic and social class structure of the city. Of the over two thousand students, 40 percent are black, 35 percent white, 20 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent of Oriental origins. Half the students qualify for free lunch, and as many come from single families; a few seniors live on their own. There are occasional intimations of discrimination (each year about one hundred parents contest an admission decision, and about ten succeed in overturning it)—to which the faculty have a well-rehearsed response. Pointing to a group of drawings, they chal-

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lenge: "Show me which is the work of a black kid, which was done by a Jewish or Italian!"

In addition to a select student body, the school's specialized focus calls for a unique curriculum and a faculty with unique proficiencies. As a consequence, A&D enjoys a fair degree of autonomy in the highly centralized secondary education system operated by the New York City Board of Education. The school is given a freer hand in designing and implementing the vocational program, and a greater voice in selecting faculty and students, than schools under the Board's jurisdiction usually enjoy.

With such amplified opportunities for making choices and exercising options, it becomes possible, to a degree, for the school to invent itself, possible for the faculty and administration to envision an education for the commercial artist, and strive to realize that vision. It was a search for this conception that framed my visits to A&D late in the spring of 1982, when I spent four days getting to know the school.[1] On my quest I carried, as all itinerant observers will, the baggage of previous learnings and convictions; it would be disingenuous to smuggle them in without open declaration. Although my guidebook for exploring a vocational school was an anthology, the territory was mapped for me by Alfred North Whitehead:

> technical . . . education . . . must be conceived in a liberal spirit as a real intellectual enlightenment in regard to principles applied and services rendered. In such an education geometry and poetry are as essential as turning a lathe. . . .
>
> The antithesis between a technical and a liberal education is fallacious. There can be no adequate technical education which is not liberal, and no liberal education which is not technical; that is, no education which does not impart both technique and intellectual vision. In simpler language, education should turn out the pupil with something he knows well and something he can do well. This intimate union of practice and theory aids both.[2]

The distinction between liberal and technical education, asserting the insufficiency of each, offers a perspective that not only guides observation—it also informs perception. By furnishing some of the telling questions for my brief but intense sojourn at A&D, this distinction gave shape to the untidy collection of impressions and experiences that were my raw materials: What is the school making of its special circumstances? What educational ideas and ideals hold sway

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at this nexus of public schooling, the arts, and the commercial world, what pedagogical practices? How do the arts—which epitomize the liberal spirit—fare when made the aim of technical training? Who best instructs in a vocational school? How is the craft of teaching acquired by those already proficient in their specialized crafts? Does the school community possess the collective imagination to cultivate a distinct identity, and does it have the requisite political savvy to keep the institutional bureaucracy from usurping it?

My depiction of the school is thus neither comprehensive nor a faithful likeness. I chose to highlight strong and weak features rather than strive for a balanced portrait. What follows is a series of snapshots, taken from various angles, with different powers of resolution; some are offered unframed, without explanation; others are placed in a context or accompanied by elaborate captions. The more suggestive of the pictures remain blurred, raising puzzlement and lingering questions rather than confident interpretations.

FIRST GLIMPSES

Lights go on in a classroom nearly two hours before the official school day begins. The Seven A.M. Painting Class assembles, setting up the canvasses they left off working on the day before. Their model, a young man, sits slumped in a chair with his head propped up in the palm of his hand.

The group of a dozen or more students and a sprinkling of former students meets daily under the guiding eye of Irwin Greenberg, teacher of illustration. He opens this class to all comers, giving no credits and receiving no pay. The participants contribute a quarter each for a model or take turns posing.

Rudolfo, a senior, who traveled an hour down from the Bronx, talks warmly of his favorite teacher as he paints: "He is a very dedicated man, sensitive to the students." The class draws a special caliber of students, six or more winning art scholarships every year. Rudolfo is one of these. He tells what will become a familiar story at A&D. His parents have treated him as the "family artist" ever since he began drawing at age eight. In junior high, an art teacher encouraged him to apply to A&D, and helped to prepare his portfolio for admission. Rudolfo finds it difficult to pay for the supplies needed in the school (around two hundred dollars a year) and occasionally

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makes use of the fund set up by the Parents Association to help out students who are hard-pressed for money.

Early on, Rudolfo was attracted to cartooning, but now plans to become an illustrator. Next year, he continues his training at the Art Students' League. "This school is a good start, but you need more."

Greg, one of the regulars, has been working as an illustrator and restorer of paintings since his graduation from A&D in 1976. Concerned that doing too much illustration will erode his style, he accepts fewer assignments than he is offered. His ultimate goal is to live from and for painting.

Greenberg is a low-key presence in the room. He is responsive to signals that a student is ready for a quiet discussion at the easel, but does not initiate a lot of teacherly talk. His gestures express something of the wonder that drawing, "putting down on paper what we see and feel . . . into a form others can respond to," still holds for him. Introducing his students' drawings for the '*82 Yearbook*, he puts it into words:

> Drawing in charcoal is drawing with an implement that is like an extension of the hand. In that sense it is the perfect medium. It is simple. . . . there is an easy continuity between what is observed, felt and drawn. . . . Drawing from observation is an endless joy and . . . endless growth. . . . the more drawing [students] do, the more they see and the more they want to draw.

After the early painting class, Greenberg goes on to a full day of teaching. Watching him later in the day as he supervises a sketching class, the contrast with the morning is palpable. The assignment involves two problems related to depicting the chair placed in the front of the room. The students here need prodding: "I would respect you a lot more if you'd put that away, and get to work on the problems. Please." He speaks softly, the attempted sternness shadowed by a note of resignation. After the sketching assignment, he calls the class to the back of the room to look at the work of a contemporary painter. One of the kids detaches himself from the group and sits down. "Give me a break," Greenberg pleads. The student saunters back, murmuring under his breath, "I don't give a shit about this."

Within the space of a single teaching day, Greenberg touches, and is touched by, the best and the worst in the school. Observing his encounters is a salutary reminder that, pivotal as teachers may be to the quality of schooling, they cannot wholly determine their students'

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educational experiences. To teach is to create a meeting place, an occasion for teacher and student to consider a common topic. If either arrives tired, preoccupied, disinterested, or uncommitted, the experience will be diminished for both.

* * *

Jackie is my guide on a quick orientation tour of the building. In her jeans and blazer with upturned collar, she has an air of elegance, clearly bringing a sense of style to fashion design, her chosen field. A friendly, bubbly young woman, Jackie lives her life at a breathtaking pace, up at 5:30 every morning to get some work done before the long subway ride from Queens, where she lives with her mother. Her senior year program is rounded out by a plethora of extracurricular activities—Jackie is an active participant in the Fashion Club and the Drama Club, a factotum in organizing the yearly Fashion Show, and on the basketball team.

Last year she was selected by the faculty to take the leadership class, designed to give students some formal leadership skills—how to organize and chair meetings, draft agenda, and so on. To this already dizzying schedule Jackie adds three courses at a nearby community college, in order to keep her social security benefits, which, without documented enrollment in college, will stop at age eighteen.

For Jackie, the school is an arena for unfurling her considerable talents and energies. As we walk down hallways, her account is interrupted by interchanges with other students; A&D's self-description as "the school that works" comes to life through these students. Some talk feelingly about their reactions to the mix of people they found in the school:

> When I first came here, I had all the stereotypes, but I got to meet a lot of different people, got exposed to a lot of different cultures. I met a Russian girl, and found out she was just like everyone else. I made friends with a Philippine girl. She taught me about purple rice. Can you imagine eating purple rice?

Others describe an esprit and comradeship they cherish. Bobby tells of a friend who wanted to quit fashion design because he found it just too hard. "A bunch of us sat him down in the lunchroom, and told him what a good designer he was, and he agreed to hang in there."

Positive feelings about the school are not limited to the successful students. Jason, marginal academically, became deflected from archi-

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tecture and failed to get an Executive Internship (a junior year option to work in the field for a term) because of low grades, but still feels that "everybody here is an artist, and people have respect for each other."

* * *

The tenth-grade English class has just read a short story from *Points of Discovery,* an anthology on the theme of self-recognition. The story tells of a boy with a passion for horses and a monumental indifference to school, where his singular interest is neither valued nor accommodated. John Browne leads the discussion with a sure hand. He focuses the students just enough to get his points in about story structure and characterization, but seems mostly concerned with engaging the kids in the meaning of the story, using it as a vehicle for some self-reflection, perhaps even self-discovery, on their part. The analogy is quickly drawn between love of horses and love of art; the students need no help in zeroing in on the wasteland that school is for the boy, or to make connections to their own schooling: "Why do I need to know about triangles, about geometry—you only use it in school, then you don't need it anymore." The teacher tugs at a chord that resounds: "Has anyone heard at home that school will lead to a better life?" Groaning chorus: "All the time!"

Only one student comes to the school's defense, without disagreeing with the general sentiment: "In this school you get a choice, at least half a day, to do what you want to do."

I am taken by surprise that in this freewheeling discussion, no one, not even the teacher, makes the standard case for expanding horizons, nor has anyone acknowledged the artist's need for a perspective broader than the drawing board. When I asked Browne about this after class he replied, "I would not lecture to these kids—they have a sense of being different—it would only turn them off." His goal, he explains, was for the students to see that for them, school is not a waste of time, that "they can follow their interests here."

AN AERIAL VIEW: THE CURRICULUM IN OUTLINE

Life in the school is patterned most directly by the organization and content of the curriculum. The essential features of the plan of

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studies offered at A&D have remained remarkably stable during a period that has brought extensive changes and occasional turmoil to secondary education. The school's *raison d'être,* the training of commercial artists, forms the heart of its educational plan. About half of all courses and the better part of all school-related work are devoted to the arts. Entering ninth-graders begin with two periods of commercial art daily, receiving an orientation to the field through its basic tools and techniques. There is training in lettering, life and perspective drawing, and working through design problems in several media.

The hallmark of the arts curriculum, and an integral part of the curriculum for over forty years, is a series of six-week rotational workshops. All tenth-grade students go through this sequence, designed to provide some grounding in each of six basic areas. The rotationals in drafting, printmaking, color media, life drawing, photography, and design also give students the opportunity to assess their aptitudes and interests, with an eye toward selecting an area of specialization for the last two years in high school.

In the junior and senior years, the concentration on the arts intensifies. Students may take three or four periods of art a day, and must complete four terms in the major of their choice. There are eleven areas of specialization: advertising art, architecture and interior design, cartooning and animation, costume design and draping, display sculpture, fashion illustration, motion picture production, package design, photography, silk screen, and theater arts. Permissible combinations of majors further increase the available options. By and large, students get slotted into their first choices, although occasionally, selections and resources become misaligned, and compromises are then necessary.

To the uninitiated, the selection of a major appears to be guided by the students' interests and proficiencies. On closer scrutiny, a distinct status hierarchy emerges: by all accounts, architecture commands the greatest prestige; it is also the most academically demanding area, requiring advanced mathematics. In contrast, cartooning is placed at the bottom, with illustration and painting, in keeping with traditional distinctions, at increasingly higher rungs on the status ladder.

Contained in just half the school day, the academic program necessarily lacks the variety and depth of a comprehensive curriculum. City and State preordain the core program: four years of English, three-and-a-half of social studies, two of math and science, and half a

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year each of music, health, and physical education. These requirements leave only a few slots for electives; the discretionary time is used largely to strengthen traditional areas such as math and science and Advanced Placement English, and to offer two foreign languages, Spanish and French.

A CROSS-SECTIONAL VIEW OF THE ART PROGRAM

The backbone of the vocational program is studio instruction, and one would therefore expect that the distinct attributes of the school would be found in the art classes. Yet, after a score of visits, their essential spirit continued to elude me. My perceptions were dulled by a sense of dèja vu, an experience of reencounter rather than discovery. To be sure, the students worked at easels, drafting tables, and workbenches more than at desks; they used paint, inks, airbrushes, and acrylics more than pens. But for all these differences, much was insistently familiar. Teachers gave assignments, explained, demonstrated, repeated, and reviewed; they praised and admonished, clarified expectations, and fanned motivation. In short, they conducted themselves much the way that teachers are wont to do in classrooms everywhere. For their part, the students played their role no less conventionally: they negotiated assignments, vied for attention, supported and disrupted each other, became absorbed, disregarded instructions, showed satisfaction in completed tasks, grumbled and goofed off, got the point, and moved on.

At close range, classroom routines concealed more than they revealed. To look through the surface texture of classroom life required stepping back, to gain a wider vista, allowing the familiar to recede and the distinct contours of the A&D experience to emerge with better clarity.

The single most consequential idea guiding the vocational program inheres in the metaphor of "classroom as workplace." The message is everywhere. Prominently displayed on the principal's bulletin board is this sign, carefully lettered:

> In industry: lateness or absence from work will mean loss of pay or job.
>
> In school: lateness or absence from class can mean loss of credits or failure.

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A guidance counselor elaborates the theme, describing the school's responsibilities in rather harsh terms:

> The students have difficulty realizing that this is a vocational school. We are here to teach them a trade. If they want to earn their living in commercial art, they have to learn to do what they are told, when they are told, how they are told. They can be creative in their backyard.

This vaguely oppressive and faintly moralistic view is echoed in the minutes of a training workshop for new teachers:

> Our constituency is students . . . some of whom are not the early beneficiaries of the hidden curriculum of the middle-class home that stresses the importance of learning, verbalization of ideas, hard work, and punctuality.

The anticipated demands of the "job" imbue teaching values and shape practices. Some are made explicit in supervisory comments to teachers:

> The first semester of the major shop is critical for instilling the values, concepts, skills, and realistic demands of that area of the art industry. It is the "basic training" that enables students to meet the standards of future classes, portfolio evaluations, and ultimately the big world. To be strict is to be kind.

Teachers of advertising are urged by their supervisor to

> relate each job to the demands of the art industry. Students should be made aware that all of the emphasis of the advertising class—use of markers for initial layouts; use of ink or paint for camera-ready art; meeting deadlines; mounting and flapping art to be examined by clients—exist for substantial reasons and are not the whim of the teacher.

The effort to simulate working conditions in the classroom results in a relentless stress on production. For the most part, students are engaged in making art. The emphasis is on learning to *do* something well, with skill training—the acquisition and refinement of technique—the primary aim of instruction. In these classes, technical education is not leavened by the liberal value of learning to *know* something well: the opportunities to appraise, to understand, to analyze, or to reflect on works of art are comparatively few. The image of the artist as worker dominates, with the result that the artist's handiwork is construed primarily in instrumental terms, in the service of aims and intentions external to it. Art is, in this sense, separat-

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ed from the expressive purposes of the artists themselves—raising the question: Whose art is it anyway?

I will return to the pitfalls and paradoxes of pursuing technical goals unsupported by liberal underpinnings. It seems prudent, however, to first submit my tentative characterization of the arts curriculum at A&D to the skeptic's question: When is this not true? Are there occasions provided and experiences planned that link the liberal and the technical, when the workings of mind, heart, and hand are entwined?

A scan of course titles suggestive of such links uncovers three. To my surprise, all three originate outside the arts program. "History through Art" is offered in the Social Studies Department, "Math-Art" is an alternative course for students achieving below average in mathematics, and "Art and Language" is an English course. All three are teacher-initiated electives, representing exceptional effort on the part of a faculty member.

History through Art

Developed by Sheila Geist—who obviously savors teaching it—the course deals with works of art as cultural artifacts, having the power to inform about societies and historical epochs, as well as about art itself. It may be the only course in the school so oriented. Its outline elaborates an ambitious set of fifteen aims that would take years of study to achieve in any depth. Geist's purpose, however, in a nutshell, is "to see art as a pictorial record, as a form of knowledge about past societies . . . to understand the purposes art has served in different societies . . . how art served these purposes, with what means and to what effects."

Three field trips to museums that lie within the one-mile radius of the school—perceived as the "campus" by the proponents of the school's present site—punctuate the school term. The students are required to document these visits by verbal and visual accounts of their experiences. From those I saw, the accounts proved illuminating; for most of the students, this was their first visit to the museums virtually in their own backyard. Their comments were touching in their naiveté and in the awakenings they signal, yet at the same time are disconcerting for the poverty of experience they reveal:

When I first went to see the paintings, I thought that they were going to be old and dull, but to my surprise, they were beautiful. The colors were simply

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beautiful, full of sparkle and radiance. . . . I especially liked the painting of Rembrandt, because he painted himself as a talented man, which he was, but he wanted everyone to see that he was.

The most important thing I learned was about impressionism. This might sound ignorant, but before I went to the museum, I did not have any idea what impressionism was. The idea that something can look so realistic from a distance, then as you approach it, is no longer so, is terrific. I've become familiar with the works of Monet and Manet. How do they get that effect? I find it fascinating and also fun to look at. It plays tricks on your eyes.

Seeing works of Goya has given me ideas for my own painting. His use of the brush to get a certain effect . . . the way he can make things look swiftly done yet graceful, has helped me a great deal with problems I've found in trying to achieve that effect.

I realized that art is not just pretty pictures.

The students' comments are made all the more poignant by the missed opportunities they speak to. These are not recalcitrant, resisting students, but youngsters ready to be awed, to be shown, to be taught, to be connected to an artistic past. Many testify to feeling isolated from art and artists who have gone before. "I got the strange feeling looking at these works that were done so many years ago. It's like the artist himself was here." Another writes,

I got a chance to get lost in another era, and most important, to learn about the limitations and freedom of my own artistic expression. . . . I am proud to have this gift of art, and looking at these works makes me realize my uniqueness in the world as an artist. Perhaps if other artists would take the time to look at their "roots," the brilliant style that was painting would be reborn.

The student's comments provided a context for my class visit. The discussion centered on the roots of impressionism. Geist was working on the distinction between naturalism and realism. It was hard going; the students seemed inexperienced in the kind of analysis she was attempting, and had few analytical constructs at their disposal to tackle the process. The discussion was lively, nonetheless, and the interest in looking at the reproductions used to illustrate points was high. I realized that this kind of discussion was a rare occurrence in a program in the visual arts.

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Math-Art

The teacher has drawn three rectangles on the board; the class contemplates them, trying to decide which they find aesthetically most pleasing. Consensus is easily reached: Delores Hoffman points out—with satisfaction—that they have chosen the "golden rectangle," the one she constructed according to the formula devised by the ancient Greeks to appeal to the human eye. In length 1.618 times its width, the rectangle represents, the Greeks believed, the ideal proportion for this geometric form.

The discussion that follows, including the on-the-spot exercise the students are asked to do, reveals discordant, yet appealing, elements. Assigned the task of constructing a similar rectangle with a given width of 20 centimeters, it becomes apparent that a number of these tenth-grade students have not mastered the simple arithmetic operations involved. While helping the students with multiplication problems, the teacher picks up on the distinction between *similar* and *congruent* as these are used formally, one requiring a match of angles between geometric figures, the other indicating an identity of size as well.

The discussion broadens to consider the preoccupation of the Greeks with ideal proportions as the critical aesthetic dimension, in contrast with the Arabs, who, in developing the concept of symmetry, focused on the exploration of the various symmetries that inhere in tessalations. There is some speculation on the origin of these striking differences. Greek interest in the human body is contrasted with the Moslem prohibition on representing the human form. The possible consequences of living in a mountainous, vividly three-dimensional landscape, as opposed to a flat desert terrain, on the perceptual organization of a people are touched on.

Math-Art was developed by Hoffman, a mathematics teacher on her way to a doctorate at Teachers' College. Her original experimental course has piqued the interest of two of the faculty, who are now teaching it as well. It is taken mostly by low-achieving students who are in need of remedial instruction. What effects the course has on traditional math skills is not clear. The students learn to construct patterns illustrative of formalized geometrical relationships (examples of which have become well known through the work of Escher) at the same time that they are exposed to an analysis of the mathe-

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matical properties of these patterns. The course offers an uncommon perspective on the organization of space and permits the students to create art within the boundaries of a set of formal rules, all in a refreshingly broad context.

Art and Language

A more descriptive title for the course might be "The Artist in Literature." The text of the week is Chiam Potok's *My Name is Asher Lev,* a novel of the artist as a young man in Brooklyn. The class is summarizing, from what they have gleaned from the novel, the essential qualities of the artist. The main points discussed are far from trivial—commitment, understanding of self, having something to express and the means which which to express it—but somehow they are diminished by being listed in numbered order on the board. The conversation is particularly lively around the topic of balancing the artist's need to become free of conventions, yet remain connected; to shed inhibitions, yet not tear away from "roots."

During the second half of the period, the class looks at a short film of an interview with Southwestern artist Peter Hurd. The focus shifts from general ideas to the works of one painter in a particular setting. Led by the teacher, the students try to discern the values and meanings Hurd's images enfold, and examine the techniques he uses to convey his particular vision of the Southwestern landscape. Again I am impressed that, midst their production-oriented experiences, the students do respond to the opportunity to probe and reflect.

Thoughtful attempts to integrate the arts with other subjects are not confined to these courses. Barbara Rothenberg, chairperson of the English Department, teaches oral interpretation of poetry, and uses the rich visual imagery of Emily Dickinson's poetic riddles to engage her students. Through transposing verbal and visual images, the class explores the similarities and singularities of each.

Veronica Kelly, Social Studies chairperson, provides an inspired example in her desire to see in the students a "burning interest in the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation." She kindles that interest with familiar concerns and fans it with novel ideas. As an example of an advertising campaign—and a rather persuasive one at that—she presents the speech made by John Tetzel to the people of Mainz, urging them to buy indulgences:

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Consider that for each mortal sin you commit, you undergo seven years of penance and contrition either in this life or in Purgatory. Reflect on your life. Think of all the mortal sins you have committed!

But I am not here today to offer you despair. I am here to give you hope. I offer you these confessional letters, usable any time in your life. With them you can obtain full indulgence, complete forgiveness for your sins. . . . you can buy this peace of mind for only one half a florin!

Purchase these letters today and they will bring your soul safely into the land of Paradise. Remember:

> As soon as the coins in the money chest ring,
> the soul out of Purgatory spring.

The austerity of the exclusively hands-on training regime is mitigated by the efforts of individual teachers, mostly from the academic departments. These initiatives do not, however, combine to an overall conception for integrating the arts into the general curriculum, or conversely, the insinuation of literary, social, or even art-historical concerns into the vocational program. Given the school's relatively tight control over the program, a closer look at the faculty and administration may illuminate the origins and rationale of the educational choices inherent in the training plan.

TEACHERS AND TEACHING

The teaching staff, around 120 in all, are roughly divided between the arts and academic departments. The faculty, reflecting the composition of the teaching corps in the city, are predominantly white. Like the students, most commute from other parts of New York. Several alumni teach here, alongside colleagues who are entering their fourth decade at A&D.

The art faculty did not arrive by the common route of teacher training institutions. Teaching, in fact, is not their first professional choice. All must have a minimum of five years' experience in the field to become eligible for the special training course that leads to vocational certification.

Why they traded commercial art for public school teaching is a question anticipated by a few of the faculty: some speak of the ambivalence toward, even discomfort with, the competitiveness, the pressures, the "phoniness" of the advertising world; many talk of the

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rewards of working with young people. How well do the arts specialist work with young people, and what kind of teachers do they make? For all their foreshortened training for this role, they receive no additional support for improving the quality of their instruction than that already built into institutional routines. Two such mechanisms are centrally mandated: supervisory observations and departmental meetings. The first focuses on the individual teacher's work in the classroom; the other is an opportunity for contact with colleagues and for joint decisions. Neither, however, provides opportunity for professional growth, and both have only marginal effects on the quality of teaching.

The responsibility for observing teachers falls on the principal and the department heads; each year they are assigned a specified number of observations to make and are provided with a mandated set of procedures for conducting them. The format varies little: a lesson plan, prepared by the teacher and specifying the objective, method, and goal of the lesson, frames the process. The supervisor spends a full period in the class and prepares an evaluation of the lesson, which is then discussed with the teacher. While differences in each supervisor's discernment and percipience come across clearly in the written evaluation, the essential form of these appraisals is predictable. There is first a description of the lesson, in relatively neutral tones, followed by a set of comments highlighting the teacher's commendable acts, then suggestions for improvement embodying varying degrees of criticism, and finally, a summary containing praise and exhortation for continued good work. The teacher has the option to comment on the evaluation in writing or simply to sign it. In either case, it enters the teacher's file.

The evaluation thus attains the status of a quasi-legal document, and the entire process of observation becomes more a bureaucratic than a didactic event. For those department heads who promote a particular conception of teaching, the observation presents an opportunity to reinforce the teaching practices they favor and to encourage the attitudes they would instill in their faculty. An evaluation written by an art supervisor, for example, reveals a recurring concern with techniques of questioning.

> Continue to work on your questioning. Skillful phrasing of pivotal questions of the "how" and "what" variety are the core of the developmental lesson. They stimulate conceptual thinking and move ideas sequentially. . . .

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I suggest that you include a minimum of three pivotal questions in each lesson plan—one as motivation, one as medial summary, and one to pull things together at the end of the period.

Another stresses the benefits of keeping written records of the concepts and terms of the primary visual lessons. Yet evaluations as a method of improving the quality of teaching are sadly lacking. Supervisory observations have become ritualized occasions, with the teacher placed in a defensive rather than a reflective posture; and the one-shot format serves only to diminish the probability of following through on even sensible suggestions.

Departmental meetings are no more effective in staff development than are the observations. The brief monthly meetings are taken up with the organizational matters facing such units, and the substantive issues touched on revolve around curricular matters such as the addition or modification of courses. There is only a rare chance to reflect on the departmental program as a whole.

In addition to refining their instructional skills, vocational faculty members need to keep pace with developments in their area of specialization. A number of teachers—just how many is difficult to determine—continue to free-lance, both to supplement their income and to keep their hand in the trade. And it becomes apparent that professional work is essential also for maintaining credibility with students, who are well aware of the gap between teaching salaries and the earnings of successful commercial artists. This gap effectively prevents the recruitment of top-drawer professionals into teaching. Although not necessarily injurious to the quality of instruction—for the hard-driving entrepreneurial spirit needed for commercial success may well work against effective teaching—this state of affairs nevertheless does raise questions about the faculty members' ability to keep informed about a fast-moving, even faddish field. Equally critical, can the faculty provide the training and vision to enable their students to surpass their mentors' accomplishments? These issues, of course, are not unique to commercial art, but are common whenever "doing" and teaching bifurcate—where an apprentice model separates off and becomes institutionalized as an independent activity.

For a perspective on the arts program from the vantage point of the trade, I sought out members of the school's Advisory Commission; Karl Fink, a prominent graphic designer, who has just stepped

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down as chairperson of the Commission, provided me with one. In his essay "Visual Literacy," which appeared in *Graphis Annual,* the showcase of the field, Fink speaks of the qualities he seeks in contemporary designers: "a keen awareness of the world beyond the drawing board . . . a new respect for the viewer . . . an assumption that the subtle, the surprising, the unexpected, the visual pun, will be well within . . . [his] grasp."[3] He goes on to describe the origins of these widened perspectives of contemporary graphic artists, and converges on their training:

> Typically, the education of today's designers and artists encompasses far more than skills' training. Many young practitioners are the products of liberal arts colleges and universities whose art curricula have been sufficiently strengthened to attract serious students of design; others are graduates of the many art schools which, recognizing the need to expose students to other disciplines, have incorporated liberal arts and social study courses into their programs of study.

The issue is joined for A&D in these observations; with its emphasis on hands-on training in the basic skills of the trade, the school appears to be keeping faith with its charge of vocational training for entry-level jobs. But is such emphasis a sufficient preparation for students to work themselves out of the "bullpens," where the mechanical, repetitive jobs are performed?—jobs that, by all accounts, are rapidly becoming mechanized, largely wiping out the pool of entry-level positions.

The students of A&D have effectively decided the issue, for fully 85 percent seek higher education after graduation, half continuing their training in institutions specializing in the arts, the others going on to colleges and universities. (In light of this, the classification of A&D as a vocational high school appears quixotic.) Just how many students who continue their formal education stay with it is not known, nor is there reliable information on the ultimate fate of graduates of A&D; those who have become recognized names in their field are repeatedly cited, but they are always the same handful.

Changing times have beclouded the earlier clarity of purpose that distinguished the school. Going back to the original vision, and following its development, proved a rewarding journey.

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IN RETROSPECT

The roots of the High School of Art and Design reach back to the Great Depression and the New Deal's Works Project Administration, which legitimated, perhaps for the first time in the country's history, art as work. Artists were paid for their efforts, for communal murals in public buildings, for individual projects created in shared workrooms. By designating art as a productive activity and incorporating it into the daily life of the community, the ground was prepared for recognizing the commercial possibilities inherent in the skills and works of artists.

The notion of a vocational arts program was conceived by a small group of art teachers in the mid-thirties, who presented their case to the Board of Education. It was not happenstance that when the Board approved the opening of the School of Industrial Arts in 1938, the faculty of eight and student body of 122 would share a building with a WPA art school for adults.

Once started, the school never lost its footing, but its faculty and ever-growing body of supporters were confronted with obstacles at almost every turn. The leading figure to emerge from the original group was John B. Kenny, who was appointed principal by the founder of the school in 1941. Kenny guided the school through two crucial decades, retiring in 1964. The school is an important part of his life still. At 83, an imposing figure with a precisely trimmed goatee, now turned snow white, he obviated a request by me to see him by calling to suggest it himself.

Kenny's recollections of maneuvers and machinations, of aligning powerful friends and rallying supporters on behalf of the school, nearly overwhelm the educational aspects of creating a new school, and are salutary reminders of the fundamentally political nature of public education. "Surprisingly, there were many enemies of the school in the early days"—Kenny is unable to contain his disbelief even now. The establishment of a school with a major art component was promptly disputed by the High School of Music and Art as an encroachment on its designated area. The emphasis on the commercial aspects of the program, at the same time, invited objections from the High School of Commerce, which was prepared to supplement its curriculum with courses in the arts.

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Early on, Kenny organized active parent groups. Along with the faculty, they pressured and cajoled—and did not hesitate to threaten with picket lines and letter campaigns to influential figures—to get the school established. The resolution passed by the Board of Education, designating it as a training school for the commercial arts, specified that the art faculty members must be professionals in their field first, and teachers by virtue of an abbreviated course designed to certify them. An advisory committee was also mandated, to be composed of knowledgeable and successful practitioners, who would ensure that the school's program served the needs of the trade. Kenny chuckles at the thought that this mechanism, designed in part to control the school, proved instead to be its major source of power.

Its existence assured, the school fought and won two subsequent battles, which shaped it into the unique institution it has become. Without losing sight of the primary goal of vocational training—the students were taught not only to design a layout, but also to cast type—Kenny fought for a broad curriculum from the start. The Board took a more restrictive view, prohibiting the school from offering foreign languages or advanced mathematics—subjects required only for academic diplomas. Kenny juggled resources and bootlegged college preparatory courses into the curriculum. Confronted with a *fait accompli,* and the prospect of angry parents accusing it of depriving their children of further educational opportunities, the Board backed down and provided the resources for a full academic program in conjunction with vocational training. In the early years, the school day was extended by an hour to accommodate the dual program.

The second noteworthy battle raged over a suitable building for the school. The original quarters on West 40th Street, built before the Civil War, had to be abandoned when the ceiling caved in. Subsequent moves to other old buildings hardly kept pace with the growth of the school, nor did these quarters meet its specialized needs. By the 1950s, one thousand students were spread about in three buildings in Manhattan, and Kenny's campaign for a building to the school's own specifications was in full swing. Locations were offered, but Kenny held out for mid-Manhattan. His objective was twofold: to have the resources in the area accessible to the students, and to have the school at hand to the professionals, whom he planned to enlist in the school's affairs.

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Yet another enemy materialized as Kenny zeroed in on the school's present site: the neighboring community did not welcome a vocational school in its midst, and organized to keep it out. In search for allies, Kenny obtained the support both of John Lindsay, then the district's Congressman, and Robert Wagner, then Borough President of Manhattan. The neighborhood succumbed. Kenny oversaw the design and construction of the building, and presided over the school for another four years after it moved to its new building in 1960.

Kenny's retirement coincided with an unstable period in the city system, heightened for A&D by a series of principals of brief tenure. It was a time of the school wars, a time that brought decentralization to the city's elementary schools, and the teachers' strike that went along with it deeply divided the faculty. Recalling the period and its aftermath, a faculty member commented, "There is a teacher in this school who smiled at me for the first time yesterday since 1969."

The overt conflict slowly abated. In 1971, Irwin Gross, the present principal, was appointed, and the school settled into a more stable existence. Gross is of a temperament and style different from Kenny, and he has put his own stamp on the school.

Gross has nearly three decades of service behind him, most of them as an art specialist. His connections with A&D are nearly as long-standing; he recalls sending promising students here twenty-nine years ago, as a junior high-school art teacher. A painter himself, he is impatient with romantic notions of the artist. "The image of the artist as emancipated individual, waiting for inspiration, is a far from true image. Artists are hardworking people. They must be disciplined, prepared to meet schedules, to satisfy clients."

In his role as educator, Gross stresses the school's responsibility to prepare the students for "the trade," a charge he interprets in a straightforward, if contained, manner, emphasizing the technical and skill-related aspects of training. He is not a pedagogical ideologue, and professes no particular educational philosophy.

In his administrative role, Gross is described as laissez faire by several faculty members. "He believes that if you got the job, you know what you are doing," elaborates a department chairperson. "It works well for this school. Artists need freedom."

Gross does not appear to be a demanding man. He seems to value stability perhaps above all institutional blessings. He speaks with

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pride and satisfaction of the school, extolling its many quite genuine merits—an attitude that leaves the impression of Gross more as an ambassador-at-large than as an administrator immersed in the details of day-to-day management.

The ongoing operation of the school is, in fact, in capable hands now. Two new assistant principals came on recently, both clearly in control of their domains. One, Helen Obey, the assistant principal for administration, has broad responsibilities for organizational matters, ranging from scheduling, budget implementation, and faculty assignments to the many extrainstructional duties that teaching entails, as well as overall curriculum planning.

Obey has been busy overhauling the operating structures and procedures of the school since stepping into her job after several years as head of the Math Department. She is a gifted administrator, intent on creating order and clarity where muddling through was once the more common mode of proceeding. Decisive and purposeful, she seems skilled in involving everyone affected in planning the detailed procedural blueprints she works with, consulting widely in drawing them up, but preferring few deviations once they are established.

By her own unapologetic description a consummate bureaucrat, Obey conceives of her job as the art of functioning optimally within the prevailing policies and mandates. As a result, she spends little of her considerable energies bemoaning, resisting, or subverting directives—a common reaction on the part of school administrators to some of the demands and restrictions of the Board.

Skilled in the art of delegating responsibilities, Gross is free to attend to other concerns. The high visibility of the school owes much to his effort, reflected in the awards and prizes regularly captured by the students and the institution. He maintains cordial contact with the Advisory Commission, even though it is no longer actively involved, as it was in an earlier era, in the school's affairs. Gross appears to be balancing the benefits of support against the liabilities of interference; as a result, those members with a mild interest in the school enjoy their partly ceremonial role, whereas the few who would like to become more actively engaged in exploring new directions for the school are experiencing some frustration. Genuinely appreciative of the merits of the school that is in his keeping, Gross focuses his energies on maintaining its virtues and incrementally ameliorating its shortcomings.

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In search of new directions or improvements in the school, I scanned the list of goals and objectives all schools are required to formulate. Two relate to student achievement: to increase the number of students who receive a Regents-endorsed diploma, the more academic of the city's two-tiered certification program (last year, fourteen graduates received the lesser city-endorsed diploma), and to reduce the drop-out rate—around 7 percent each year—which, in its cumulative effect, creates a sizable gap between entering and graduating students.

The goal to involve staff in student recruitment includes plans for a new school catalogue—the first in twenty years, and that one, a twin of the original produced in the earlier Kenny era. What is more interesting, that the new catalogue reveals no major departures testifies to the remarkable stability of the school's program.

The development of "new curriculum within recognized areas of industry need" is also a stated goal; it includes the procurement of equipment to support new courses. The school was recently granted $500,000 to introduce a program in computer graphics, which entailed training two faculty in the use of the equipment. There is some skepticism among members of the Advisory Commission with what they see as a preoccupation with sophisticated equipment; "You only need a pinhole camera to train as a photographer," one remarked.

The subject of equipment proves to be a charged one, tied to the very identity of the school and the training it provides. Access to equipment is implicated in the tacit decision to maintain the school's designation as "vocational," even though the program, which prepares most of the students for higher education, could qualify A&D as a specialized academic school, a much more prestigious status. As it is, A&D is the beneficiary of funds and other resources that help secure the specialized tools vocational schools may require. At least two of the Board members and some faculty members question the need for some of these. Indeed, the school has its share of outdated and unused paraphernalia gathering dust in storerooms; yet, it is loath to give up entitlement to such resources.

The more substantive concern links equipment to the conception of the training offered. Are the school's aims best characterized as an effort to prepare, for example, generic photographers, to develop in students a sense of visual values, to enable them to discriminate and create the potentials inherent in the photographic image? Or is the

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primary goal to familiarize students with a range of photographic tools and the skills to use them? While it would be foolish to present these as sharp alternatives, differences in emphases are clearly possible and are of consequence. The point is echoed in Karl Fink's call for the broadening of vocational training; it is also raised by Dewey, in a discussion of the role of practicum in the training of teachers that is no less illuminating in the present context. Dewey distinguished between doing practical work with the object of providing "a working command of the profession [and] control of technique . . . and management," and using the practicum "to supply the intellectual method of good workmanship."[4] The former strategy, according to Dewey, is designed to make "on the spot . . . an efficient worker," while the other aims to lay the groundwork for the self-regenerating professional.

That there is more than one conception of ends and aims operating at A&D is plain. What is not easily discerned is the relationship between these various conceptions. Are they at odds, the source of conflicting messages for students and of tensions for teachers, or do they coexist, complement, and provide a balance that permits students to chart their own course between the educative styles offered?

PUZZLEMENTS AND RANDOM OBSERVATIONS

If the faculty equivocates on the goal of preparing workers or professionals, it is also ambivalent about the aim of training artists or artisans. The distinction between fine and commercial art is treated with impatience by art faculty members, who draw such stock examples as the apotheosis of Toulouse-Lautrec's posters into fine art once their commercial purpose had been fulfilled. Similarly, the distinction between art and design is glossed; in each case, the quality of the work is cited as the only valid criterion for characterizing art. Although reluctant to discuss it, faculty members nevertheless make distinctions and judgments that testify to the power of the dichotomy. Fine art, if not the mother lode, is at least a rich vein to be mined. A passage in the student handbook makes clear this utilitarian posture:

> While fine arts has always been an important basis of advertising art, modern painting has exerted a stronger influence than any previous style. Within

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weeks after abstract expressionism, pop art, op art, made their appearance, their ideas were extended into layouts, posters, TV cards and packaging.

Karl Fink notes, somewhat more elegantly, "the un-self-conscious adoption of concepts from the fine arts."[5]

A more intricate issue embedded in the distinction between fine and commercial art concerns the locus of intent. Are commercial artists, more so than other artists, expected to relinquish their own intentions and perceptions in favor of their employers' message and point of view? On the whole, the tenor of instruction at A&D suggests such expectations. The loan of one's persuasive skills on behalf of someone else's aims raises knotty questions that elude equivocal answers, but they are surely worth pondering by youngsters preparing to enter the fray. Yet the ethical undercurrents of putting art in the service of either commercial or ideological ends are rarely discussed directly. The principal shrugs off any obligation on the school's part to help students puzzle out the implications of lending their talents to persuasive ends—to sell, to appeal, to create appearances—in the service of a client's purposes. The school has the responsibility to teach morals broadly," Gross maintains. "Kids discuss the Falkland Islands, voter registration, and general social issues." He points to the display of student posters designed on the theme "Make Your Mark in Society, Not on Society" for an antigraffiti campaign. "But we do not deal with the products the students have to sell on a moral basis. We concentrate on the aesthetic and technical aspects." He recognizes that "some kids will use their skills in socially acceptable ways, some will not. Most likely, it will be determined by economics."

In my conversations with faculty members, only one stands out in this regard, a teacher of advertising, an alumnus of A&D who had returned to teach after a few years in a small ad agency. "I try to cultivate an analytic attitude toward ads. I want the kids to be able to see them from the customer's point of view. I want them to learn how to protect themselves from ads." He stresses the pragmatic aspects of advertising ethics—the need to be credible, to rely on facts and substantive information, for "deception can backfire. But more important, I ask them, how will you feel about yourself?"

Finally, the most perplexing aspect of watching faculty members trying to chart a course between the not easily reconcilable ethos of

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fine art and its commercial counterpart, is that they have not reached out for a conception less fraught with incipient tensions, a more integrated rationale for their endeavor. One that readily comes to mind is in Dewey's words, but speaks for a defensible position: "The intelligent mechanic engaged in his job, interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his handiwork, caring for his tools with genuine affection, is artistically engaged."[6]

To his passionate protest of the "separation of art from the objects and scenes of ordinary experience," and the dire consequences that follow when art "becomes isolated from the human condition under which it was brought into being, and from the human consequences it engenders in actual life experience," Dewey has provided a solid platform on which to rest a vocational arts curriculum. Writing thirty-five years later, Rudolf Arnheim is even more specific:

> In order to regain the indispensable benefits of art, we need to think of those works as the most evident results of a more universal effort to give visible form to all aspects of life. It is no longer possible to view the hierarchy of art as dominated by the fine arts, the aristocracy of painting and sculpture, while the so-called applied arts, architecture and the other varieties of design, are relegated to the base of the pyramid as impure compromises with utility.[7]

That these all but tailor-made manifestos for a school of art and design have not been harnessed is not in itself disconcerting, but the apparent lack of interest in formulating a conception of the nature of vocational art is a source of unease. The absence of pretentious discussions on the nature of art are refreshing, yet sidestepping of the subject altogether is ultimately constricting of the students' development. Given the emphasis on production, and under rather well-structured conditions at that, the impression that remains is of the commercial artist as technician.

The ideas about art abroad in the school tend to take epigrammatic or sloganlike form. Perhaps the advertiser's preference for the one-two punch, hitting the viewer with a loaded message before the eye can blink, explains the prevalence of maxims, aphorisms, and pungent quotes in the school. The stern reminder of Vasari, "Talent and effort go together, if not, talent will be wasted," is posted in nearly every room. The "Handbook for Teachers of Vocational Art," lovingly prepared by Suzanne Osterweiler, the department chairperson,

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has a fresh set of quotations each year, ranging from Koestler's view that "the creative act is the defeat of habit by originality," to Sir Herbert Read's warning that "art is not as much a governing principle to be applied to life as a governing mechanism to be ignored at our own peril. Without it civilization loses its balance and topples into social and spiritual chaos." Some of the quotes—such as Charles Frankel's, "It is precisely the existing social separation of technology from art that makes the first brutal and the second merely genteel," are even more deviant from the ethos of the school.

Reading and hearing the word *art* in all shades of color and meaning bring to mind Alice's exchange with Humpty Dumpty: " 'That's a great deal to make one word mean,' Alice said in a thoughtful tone. 'When I make a word do a lot of work like that,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'I always pay it extra.' "

The word *art* is earning its keep at A&D, deriving income not only from covering a range of meanings, but also from the elasticity demanded of it, where on occasion *art* is used to mean a great deal, yet at other times is used to mean very little. The word also has a curious use as a modifier, such as in *sculpture arts,* to distinguish the preparation of models for large-scale manufacture from creating the single sculpture, and in referring to the design of interiors, landscapes, and industrial products as *architectural arts.* Used in these cases to dilute the meaning of prestigious activities, the tag also appears in *advertising art,* with the intent of upgrading a lesser one.

If A&D is of many minds about *art,* it is clear about a sister word—*craft:* one rarely hears it mentioned. The suggestion of the slower pace, the more distant client, the evocation of cottage industry rather than mass production, may indeed be inimical to the practice of commercial art.

* * *

Conspicuous by its absence in this collage of A&D is any attempt to appraise, or even describe, the manner and quality of the students' work. The task is made difficult by the intrinsic problem entailed in mapping the visual onto language, but even more by my uncertainty regarding reasonable expectations and suitable criteria.

The primary showcase for the students' work is the *Yearbook,* open to all seniors and faculty members. The factotum behind this massive undertaking is Tom Negele, a veteran teacher and alumnus

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of A&D, who has shepherded the book from inception through the final product for several years now. The *Yearbook* gives clear and ample evidence of a specially gifted and trained group of students. Skills and technique are manifest in the drawings, paintings, cartoons, fashion illustrations, photographs, and other works. Traces of the training process can be seen in the series of posters on a single theme or the group of models illustrating solutions to an architectural problem. The *Yearbook*, in fact, testifies to the mission of the school—the production of a similar volume by a comprehensive high school is all but unimaginable.

Moving beyond this general characterization, adjectives such as "slick" and "derivative" come to mind. For all its technical competence, the students' work rarely bears a personal stamp, a sense of "authorship," or shows much stylistic variation. There is also the impression of finished products, perhaps too finished, replete with familiar imagery, but with few traces of experimentation, of exploration. Collectively, the works speak to a sparse legacy of symbols available for the creation of visual imagery, a poverty of an iconography with rich referents. The students, for example, predictably symbolize the city as the "big apple" or the New York skyline. This holds true even in a class working on an imaginative assignment, where, for example, a project calls for a series of self-portraits: the first, a conventional rendering, the second showing the subject expressing an emotion, and the third, the subject in the grip of an extreme emotional state, one that depersonalizes and transforms. The students chose rage, fear, and happiness to work with exclusively. The symbolic vehicle for these feelings were wild animals, ghoulish graveyard scenes, and butterflies, with one memorable exception: one student integrated the three portraits into the painting of a totem pole, working in the stylized manner of that tradition.

Just how pertinent the standards and expectations implicit in these observations are to the work of high-school students in an urban public school is open to question. In that universe, A&D is an exemplary school, with its share of common problems, to be sure, but also with uncommon accomplishments to its credit. The pertinent issues raised by the school concern the enduring problems of vocational education, with its implicit danger of cultivating skills rather than people. A&D stands as a particularly provocative example in that it

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cultivates skills in a domain that has traditionally been regarded as the quintessential arena for cultivating personal sensibilities.

CODA

On rare occasions, the natural flow of events will favor the observer, and an experience of matchless timing will occur. I was so favored during the last hour of my last day at A&D. My agenda behind me, I lingered in a school that was winding up the year; class time was given over to review, summary, and preparation for finals. At this hour the building was nearly empty, with a handful of tenth-period classes still meeting. I knocked on a classroom door at random, and took my customary seat in the back row to maintain the fiction of the unobtrusive observer.

Too embarrassed to shuffle my schedule to find out what class I had happened on, I listened. The topic, to my surprise, was Parsifal and his quest for the Holy Grail. The teacher and students, in conversational tones, were discussing the meaning of the quest. Making his way to the board from time to time, the teacher set down key phrases, indicating the stations along the journey. There was talk of the search for one's own inner life, of the acceptance of the shadowed side of one's self, along with the light one, of the quest that is lifelong.

What might have been an exercise in clichéd profundities—the patent incongruousness of forcing these ideas into numbered points on the blackboard being very much on my mind—was miraculously transformed into a touching, authentic experience.

At the close of the conversation, a student spoke up and said to his teacher, "You look happy."

"Yes," the teacher replied, "because working this out together makes it easier to do what I have to do when I leave here."

"Did you say that you have children our age? Do they have problems with their parents?"

"Yes they do, but most of all I would like you to understand that the problems you have with your parents, I have with my parents—I am also a child, not only a parent."

The student nodded, the class fell silent for an instant.

For one moment the gap was closed between the generations, between teacher and students. It was a moment of liberation from the confines of the categorized self.

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It was not a time to ask "What is the title of this course? How many students in your class? How long have you been teaching?" It was a time to savor the moment, and leave.

ENDNOTES

[1]My own observations were amplified through the discerning eyes and ears of Cynthia Eaton. David Amarel sampled classrooms and talked to students, contributing a perspective that I irrevocably lacked—that of a more recent inhabitant of the world of the high school.

[2]Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), pp. 45, 48.

[3]Karl Fink, "Visual Literacy," *Graphis Annual 81/82* (Zurich, Switzerland: Graphis Press).

[4]John Dewey, "The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education," in *National Society for the Scientific Study of Education, Third Yearbook, part 1* (Bloomington, Ill: Public School Publishing Co., 1940), pp. 29, 30

[5]Fink, "Visual Literacy."

[6]John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Putnam, 1958), p. 5.

[7]Rudolf Arnheim, *Toward a Psychology of Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 38.

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Lonna Bush Jones

Five Small Schools Leave Home for Fillmore Arts Center

In any large metropolis these days, the chances are that vacant or underutilized public school buildings, sometimes in the most desirable parts of the city, have been considered for—if not actually converted to—arts centers, arts magnet schools, or specialized arts high schools. Take, for example, three schools, built before 1900, within a few blocks of one another in the upper Georgetown area of northwest Washington, D.C., an area where estates with formal gardens exist side-by-side with crackerbox row houses, and all are extremely expensive. Washington's Western High School, a large neoclassical structure built in 1898, on the highest hill north of Georgetown, is now the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, a specialized high school for 450 district students; Jackson School, across from Dumbarton Oaks, one of Washington's landmark mansions, is now leased to the Corcoran School of Art and A Salon, an artists' cooperative, for studios, classes, and community activities; and Fillmore School houses an arts program for all the children in five public schools, kindergarten through eighth grade. Its small two-story red brick building shares a street with row houses built in the early 1900s for working-class people. Anywhere else, these houses might have become shanties, but in affluent northwest Washington, with only minor cosmetic touches and landscaping, added by new owners, the smallest houses sell for $150,000 or more.

Until the 1970s, when declining enrollments precipitated change, Ellington, Jackson, and Fillmore were regular public schools, with steady, although small, student populations, in a large district school

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system, a district large both in terms of the number of schools—189—and the area covered—sixty-seven square miles, on both sides of two rivers and across one extensive park. In Washington, rivers and parks are not only major geographic features, but distinct social, political, and economic dividers as well. These particular schools happened to be in the area known as "west of the park," where, for at least the past decade, property owners have been primarily well-off adults without school-age children.

Why these three buildings, within six blocks of one another, became schools devoted to the arts can be explained variously: the buildings had architectural features that residents of Georgetown wanted to preserve; on the scale of desirable uses for building conversions, the arts rank high; and the residents expected such neighborhood opportunities and amenities.

Fillmore School was transformed into the Fillmore Arts Center primarily because six different communities set out, early in 1974, to preserve the status quo of their elementary schools, and almost ten years later, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund gave the center one of its first ten nationwide awards to public schools providing high-quality education in the visual arts, music, dance, and drama.

IN THE BEGINNING

In the fall of 1973, the superintendent of the Washington, D.C., school system was considering a massive reorganization that would affect small, underenrolled schools. Although Fillmore was built to house as many as 187 students, only 67 appeared that fall. Fillmore, it seemed, was on the way to extinction. Five neighboring elementary schools—as near as eight blocks, as far away as three miles—had similar problems. All were buildings typical of school architecture before 1915—eggcrates without auditoriums, cafeterias, gyms, or resource rooms. And as more parents opted for private education for their children, instructional programs in these schools waned, with only the most basic educational services being provided. Individual schools supported, at best, mere fractions of teacher time in the arts, physical education, science, and math.

In December, the superintendent's office announced that the six small, underenrolled schools west of the park would be closed or consolidated, but first, the schools—Fillmore, Hardy, Hyde, Key,

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Mann, and Stoddert—were given the chance to come up with a collective solution of their own. To a degree they were already aligned: for some time, two principals had been supervising four of the schools to curb administrative costs. Parents in the community, many of whom were activists for ERA, civil rights, and historic preservation, took the lead in coming up with a solution. Ten committees of fifteen people each, under a coordinating committee of twelve—made up of parents, principals, and teachers—quickly formed to produce a plan. The parents believed that the only chance to save the schools was by successfully competing with private schools in the area. The questions they posed and sought to answer were: What strengths do we have; what have we lost; how can we attract students whose parents can afford private education?

After three months of committee work, in meetings lasting far into the night, a cooperative plan emerged, fine-tuned by the coordinating committee. The plan would keep all six schools open and at the same time give to each a distinctive role, by capitalizing on existing strengths in four of the six schools and committing the other two to new instructional missions and student populations. The superintendent approved the plan. Key, Stoddert, Mann, and Hyde remained regular elementary schools, with certain distinguishing features; Hardy became a middle school for grades five through eight; and Fillmore became a resource center offering programs for all students (kindergarten through eighth grade) in the other five schools.

The parents and administrators together had created a framework for an improved educational program that cooperatively used existing resources, offered variety and choice, and retained the strengths that each school had. To institutionalize the changes, they formed the Six School Complex, Inc., a nonprofit corporation that was designed to permit some management independence in the vast school system, to provide a mechanism for ongoing coordination of programs, and to give some collective clout for seeking private funds from time to time for extras. In a broad mandate laid out by parents in 1974, Fillmore got carte blanche: "It is important that the program evolve with personal talent. All we ask is that the staff shares something of our vision and aspirations, and possesses the drive and ability to [transform] vision into reality . . . with flexibility and pragmatism."

Fillmore started out with nine optional courses, not only in the arts and physical education but, for two years, in science, literature, and

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math, too. The door was open, but in the first few years, it was a revolving door—for both staff and students—primarily because no effort had been made either to give the center a solid footing in the system or to make a commitment beyond only temporary arrangements for financing and staffing. "The school ran like a camp—children were whirlwinded through classes—three in one morning," a present staff member recalls. "In this frenzy, students turned out products, but they didn't learn much about the arts or about themselves in that setting. No one knew if they would be back the next semester."

The Six School Complex continued to pursue short-term management options and in 1977 recruited two women to share the management of Fillmore as co-directors: Patricia Mitchell, a former social studies teacher with a degree in sociology, and Andrea Adler, with a master's degree in social work. Both had been organizers for many school programs. Each worked three days a week at Fillmore, overlapping one day. Trying to cure the attitude and discipline problems—the inattention and unruly behavior—created earlier occupied most of the fall 1977 semester. Then the staff began to turn its attention to a long process that eventually changed Fillmore into the impressive school it is today; in the following three years, Fillmore established goals, in dance, drama, music, and the visual arts for each grade level, that conform to Washington's Competency-Based Curriculum, district-wide kindergarten through twelfth grade performance-based standards. But as Arnold Danoff, the teacher of instrumental music at the school, says: "Competency-based curriculum is the terminology that the D.C. school system insists we use in defining what we teach, [but] any teacher worth his salt is teaching that way anyway."

FILLMORE TODAY

Since 1977 every student from the five home schools has spent at least two hours each week at Fillmore, arriving by school bus morning or afternoon for two classes. Some students return for the after-school program or take part in the six-week summer camp. Fillmore's program would be outstanding if only by the numbers; it does not meet "the optimal" 190 minutes per week each for art and music proposed for elementary schools by national professional

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associations, but it far exceeds usual standards. And, according to one authority's recent analysis, the typical secondary school student may never study dance or drama at all. More than likely, art and music instruction amounts to one quick dose—about ninety hours of art and an equal amount of music compressed into one-semester courses in the seventh or eighth grade.[1]

Each student from the five schools takes a total of sixty-eight hours of arts instruction a year, or seventeen hours in each of two courses per seventeen-week semester. According to a Fillmore brochure, "each K–3 student rotates through all four basic arts areas during the year, thus ensuring a thorough introduction to all disciplines at an early age." There is no typical schedule, but there is a prescribed two-hour program for children in kindergarten through third grade, or two electives for those in fourth to eighth grade. For students who choose to take it, music is a yearlong rather than a semester commitment.

Choices beyond basic foundation offerings begin at grade four, when course names give clues to emphasis—"Discovering Art" (appreciation); "Music for Voice, Recorder, and Xylophone"; "Puppet Pizzaz"; and "Video Techniques." Choices increase for grades five to six—"Painting and Drawing 1" and "Modern and Jazz Dance." Other electives such as calligraphy, poetry, and fabric design were offered in past years as resources or staff interest permitted.

During the spring 1983 semester, students in grades seven and eight could take percussion, story dramatization, woodworking, filmmaking and video, cartooning, or sculpture, as well as advanced courses in the basic arts. Instruction continues in the fundamentals that need repetition and reinforcement in different contexts. Ellen Frye, the music teacher, says:

> I begin with the idea that music, speech, and body movement have rhythm in common. You might say that my students do the same thing from kindergarten to grade six, but it gets more and more complicated.
>
> We hold onto the simple songs or rhymes introduced in the first five classes for an entire semester and add canon, rondo, instrumentation, and movement. After seventeen classes, when the semester ends, we have learned more than a dozen songs or chants, but we have done fifty or sixty different things with them.

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The program for Frye's year-end general music performance by all children kindergarten through sixth grade shows what this cumulative sequential process can do (Figure 1).

The office at Fillmore is the common meeting place for all—for classroom teachers from the other schools, who accompany their charges to Fillmore and grade papers there, and Fillmore teachers, who come at lunchtime and after school. Student work is shown and discussed, incidents and strategies recycled, and ideas paraded. Each new bit is considered with interest. No one seems weary of piecing together the instructional and behavioral puzzles, building a collective knowledge. "We have a chance to reflect every day as part of the job, rather than in retrospect at the two one-day in-service sessions each year," Mitchell points out.

No one attempts to cloak school operations in secrecy. The office, with its T-shaped island of library tables for conference and work space, welcomes visitors—parents, local education officials, graduate students, and people from outside the district. And it is here that one can learn, from handouts, something of Fillmore's more unusual features: the cluster concept and cooperative program of the six schools; Fillmore's goals and objectives as they expand Washington's district-wide performance standards; the daily class schedule for this school year, which illuminates certain quantitative facts about the program.

FILLMORE PHILOSOPHY

The better basketball players come from Key Elementary School. Why? Maybe because they have low baskets rather than the regulation high baskets. Small kids, built-in success.

—Bill Briggs
Physical education teacher

Based on what they have observed and what they know from research, Fillmore makes some promises in terms of general human growth and direction of that growth in the arts and physical education—but never in terms of what any single child at a particular age will achieve. "Fillmore believes," says Mitchell,

> that any time we give a child a skill, whether in art, or music, or dance, or physical education, or drama, the child becomes a better learner, more competent and confident in his or her ability to learn. A student might, but

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Fillmore Music Performance

May 1981

GRADES 1–4 (HYDE, KEY, STODDERT)

Clapbacks
Speech monophony: *Oliver Cromwell* (traditional)
Speech canon: *Little Davy Doubt* (English Mummer's play rhyme)
Speech polyphony: *Proverbs* (traditional)
Song with ostinato: *Snail* (traditional words, tune, E. Frye)
Song: *The Rose Is Red* (traditional words, tune, E. Frye)
Song with ostinato: *The Baker* (Orff)

GRADES 2–4 (HYDE, KEY, STODDERT)

Monophonic song: *Artza Alinu* (Israeli folk song)
Monophonic song: *The Keeper* (English folk tune)
Instrumental Rondo and Canon in G Major (Orff)
Instrumental Rondo and Canon in E Minor (Orff)

GRADES 3–5 (KEY, STODDERT)

Speech monophony: *Theme from Geographical Fugue*
Speech polyphony: *Edinburgh* (Scottish folk sayings)

GRADES 2–6 (HYDE, HARDY, KEY, STODDERT)

Speech monophony: *White Bird Featherless* (Orff)
Canon: *Thirty White Horses* (Beeson)
Canon: *Twelve Pears* (Beeson)
Two-part song with accompaniment: *Prayer for Africa* (Sontonga, arr. E. Frye)
Song in mixed meter: *Tsakonikos Dance* (Greek folk song, arr. E. Frye)

GRADES 5–6 (HARDY)

Melody with student improvisations (Washburn)
Rhythmic improvisations

GRADES 3–5 (KEY)

Instrumental song and canon: *Birch Tree* (Russian folk song)

GRADES 1–6 (ALL SCHOOLS), PRIMARY AND INTERMEDIATE

Song with countermelody: *Oranges and Lemons* (traditional, arr. E. Frye)

Figure 1. Program for Year-end General Music Performance

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might not, however, have the confidence to apply that skill beyond a particular classroom. Children have definite ideas about themselves that they do not tell anybody. They hear different musical instruments in their heads, for example. They look critically and very privately at themselves.

It is Fillmore's belief that the arts bulwark a person's growth in many ways—intellectual (solving problems); emotional (finding ways to express oneself not always available in other modes of learning); perceptual (experiencing the environment through all the senses).

According to Mitchell, most experts and laymen look for the "crystallized experience," which invariably means "the product." The students at Fillmore produce many products, but the school's emphasis is on building skills rather than on outcome. "What is most important about the process approach is that it does not automatically eliminate any child," says drama teacher Ermyn King. "That's a major value in and of itself." Fillmore is not unaware of the market for child art and finished performances. "We could organize our curriculum totally around the fifty or sixty requests we get each year for student art work, or the eight to ten inquiries about performances," says Mitchell.

At Fillmore, learning is subordinate to the total experience, but natural development or unfolding is not enough. "When I took the time to look closely at Piaget," says Frye, "I said, 'So that's what you call all this.' " The school's goals emphasize skills, and most Fillmore discussions or written descriptions use the words "skills" or "skill-based" repeatedly, as, for example, in this statement about the music program for kindergarten through grade six:

> This curriculum emphasizes concept learning through skill development. In music, cognitive development goes hand in hand with the development of oral-motor skills, reading and writing skills, and aural perception skills. The skills are overlapping. Each area of the curriculum, while it may emphasize one or another set of developing skills, simultaneously builds on the other skills. Physically expressing rhythmic patterns in body movement lays the foundation for reading notes; reading and writing music in various forms leads to sharper aural perception when listening to a symphony; listening for patterns in a symphony gives the children musical ideas for expressing their own music. Performing, listening to, and reading music all require separate individual skills that are integrated into a whole.

"Instructional verbalization" is important in every program at Fillmore. "Music is a performing art, and it is through performance that

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the basic concepts are intuitively understood," Frye believes. "In each class, students create and experience, but full understanding comes only through thinking about music and organizing one's thoughts into coherent statements." These are built through the vocabulary that students acquire year by year from talk about techniques, training, and skills. "In kindergarten we might call beats 'things,' but in first grade we assign names to them," Frye continues.

Wendy Woodson's dance classes all have "instructions" at the beginning and "student critiquing and reflection" at the end. But Woodson questions and makes essential points to students within the context of their experience throughout the class. Pupils often initiate talk. Axial movement, plié, relevé, accent, phrasing, repetition, percussive, vibratory, duet, theme, transition, story line, improvisation. Students "try on" the words. Says Woodson, "I don't care if they only retain a portion of what they learn. Because we emphasize process, they will encounter almost everything again. Students take from each experience what they need."

According to Cher Ferrell, a seventh-grader at Hardy last year and former student in Woodson's dance classes,

> At Fillmore, students often overcome a serious case of the "I can'ts." In the beginning of a semester, students might say, "I'll never be able to do that," but at the end, not only do they do it, they do it well. At Fillmore everyone has something they can be proud of. Whether it is dance or filmmaking, gymnastics or drama, we all have the pride to put in our bags and take home.

A DAY IN ART CLASSES

> Artists tend to work in a style, or formal language, that is unique to them both as individuals and as followers of a particular school or movement. The style of an artist can be recognized by studying a small section of work and recognizing it as a part of the whole work.[2]

This message is written on the board in Sue Shapiro's "Discovering Art" class. Early last fall, Shapiro borrowed about two hundred 12- by 15-inch reproductions mounted on cardboard from the Art Division of the D.C. public library. "I'd rather students look at slides or large reproductions, but they are too expensive and too remote—the

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students can't hold them." Today, Shapiro reviews with fifth-graders the many clues to artistic styles—color, subject matter, degree of realism, brushwork, handling of form. Students then work in teams to practice identifying these elements, pairing works by the same artist. Then they turn individually to puzzles in which they complete reproductions of paintings representing "the isms"—impressionism, post-impressionism, cubism, expressionism, and surrealism. "I've never seen such appreciation of art appreciation," Shapiro commented.

Shapiro's questioning—why, what, how—and repeated reference to extensive lists of art terms posted around the room aid student verbalization.

> We make the abstract *very* concrete here. The students know and comprehend the structure of art. They are constantly building visual symbols for their own personal expression. These symbols come from their environment. Students understand that anyone can learn to draw, but that communicating one's thoughts through drawing is difficult. We constantly reach for that inner expression in the visual arts.

Shapiro believes the process is in the questioning, and that to succeed at Fillmore, both students and teachers must learn to question.

Harriet Lesser, teaching drawing and painting in the next classroom, is also concerned that students recognize artists' signatures and, at the same time, begin to build their own. Today she asks students to cut small squares from sheets of paper and, using the sheet as a viewfinder, to select for study a small segment of one of the many borrowed reproductions that both she and Shapiro share with classes. Lesser demonstrates how to extend oil pastels, encouraging students to capture, in their own work, more than surface appearances. Students try their hand, closely observing their chosen reproduction segment through the viewfinder, working toward skill and technique with oil pastels.

ONE SEMESTER IN CREATIVE DRAMA

> It seems like years since I've seen you, but that's the way vacations are. Even teachers have to adjust after vacations. . . . How has drama been part of your life this week?

Thus begins Ermyn King's second-grade class in creative drama, to which I was drawn time and time again. King's classes for students in

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kindergarten through third grade speak more forcefully than do eminent psychologists and volumes of studies about creative play. King extends play in an atmosphere that, at least to one child, is so serious it's reverent. "It's almost like being in church," said a third-grader.

"It is important to begin in drama with work that parallels the natural sequence of children's development and at the same time lets them know there is a world of literature out there," King says. The stories created are Fillmore's own, but material comes from Lewis Carroll, Robert Louis Stevenson, and the Arthurian legend. The quest theme is important in any semester's exploration drama that is built with contests and conflicts in mind. King's students are travelers—in the air, in water, and on land; in caves and on an island. Their adventures take place in the contemporary world and in other times, to which they journey with the help of a "time helmet" and an "invisibility button."

One semester's adventure began in an airplane. The children played themselves. There was treasure on the airplane. A storm came up. Children parachuted from the plane, which then crashed into a sea. They were rescued by a crew boat and boarded a sailing vessel; they dove to recover the treasure from the plane's wreckage, which included a bottle with a genie in it. The genie sent them to a cave. In the cave they found the graves of a king and queen, and a will bequeathing them an enchanted island. The students designed the island's environment and drew a map. A lion attacked; the children drew up a plan to capture the lion. They were rescued by someone who arrived on the island in a plane.

King's records spell out the general areas of learning related to the content of a specific dramatic exercise—

1. Air/space exploration—flying, parachuting, air travel, flight personnel roles, storm hazard, emergency landing and rescue

2. Water voyage exploration—map reading, navigating/sailing, sea chantey rhythms, sea vessel personnel roles, hazard of wind and strong currents

3. Underwater exploration—swimming, diving, encounters with ocean creatures, discovery of sunken galleon, whirlpool hazard

4. Land exploration—modes of land travel, desert caravan, mirage hazard, discovery of artifacts and burial site, climbing mountain summit, precipice hazard

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5. Cave exploration—spelunking on foot and by boat, confrontation with cave dwellers

6. Improvisational island drama incorporating key elements of previous explorations—navigation, storm, shipwreck, exploration of island, survival, confrontation with natives and lion, rescue—

and the general areas of learning related to dramatic art in and of itself, including pantomime and gesture; improvisation; games; rhythmic and musical activities; puppetry; story dramatization, bodily and verbal expression/control, concentration; interviewing; imaginative, analytical, inferential, and evaluative thinking; and role-playing/characterization.

King remembers other "learnings" not on the list. Two life-size puppets, for example, were used as the bodies of the king and queen. "In most cases, this was the students' first encounter with death. We talked a great deal about it. If we'd been working toward one particular epic or product, this would not have occurred." In King's dramas, students "live in advance of themselves." In her view "they meet challenge and crisis in their imaginations before facing them in real life. They feel powerful and equal to life."

This year the children chose roles in a medieval time, when, King says,

> everybody needed somebody else. There was a sense of injustice in that society. The children see the contrasts and set about ushering in a new era. Some children play evil characters. I've found that children with the strongest sense of good are able to be the most clearly defined trolls, for example. Those unable to prescribe their own limitations for good can't be antagonists either. I see myself as having tremendous power to reinforce and affirm values with these children—like perseverance, persistence, honesty, courage, integrity, and risk-taking.

Excerpts from a second-grader's journal, prepared at home, give some idea of how this exploration was played out (Figure 2).

To King, dramatic imagination is the primary vehicle by which humans learn. "All people, no matter the age, need to experience drama before they consider it as an art form." Student interest in theater as an art form usually begins around fifth or sixth grade and intensifies in seventh. "Twelve- or thirteen-year-olds are sophisticated about drama. They want method and medium"—techniques and scripts. But King makes her basic point with older students. This

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quote by educator Bernard Beckerman greets seventh-grade students in "Playmaking": "Theatre is nothing if not spontaneous. It occurs. It happens. The novel can be taken up, reread, put away. Not theatre. It keeps slipping between one's fingers. Stopping, it stops being theatre. Theatre is not parts—scripts, scenery, etc. It's what goes on between them."[3]

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Chapter I - As Castle People
Chapter II - Traveling Adventures
Chapter III - In the Peasant Village
Chapter IV - In the Cathedral
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Chapter VI - In the Dragon's Den

Preface

We came to a European castle in time helmets. Our time helmets said Europe 412 A.D. When we got there we heard singing La-La-La. We imagined the royalty—kings, queens, barons, duchesses, dukes, jesters, lords, ladies, children, priests, knights, squires, and the servants. We peeped into the castle window and so the story goes on.

Chapter IV - In the Cathedral

We went to the Cathedral. And after long ding-dongs of the bell got the person that recognized the gem. Out came who but The King MOTHER. She said "As You no I am Mother of the good King Richard and boo-hoo-sob-sob also of the Wicked prince John.

While my son King Richard was healing my other son Prince John took him and trough him into the "dragons den" "dragons den" echoed the castle people. And right then and there they decided to go to the dragons den and rescue King Richard even if it meant a very dangerous journey. UH OH what happens next is of course Chapter V Ventures.[4]

Figure 2. A Second-Grader's Journal Summary of a Medieval Drama.

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FILM, VIDEO, CARTOONING

Wednesdays with older students have a different feel at Fillmore, and it is a day that some teachers choose not to teach. But it is a day that Michael Cotter takes on. A visitor coming late to Cotter's filmmaking class for seventh-graders from Hardy Middle School might be inclined to agree with Norman Mailer that "making films is a cross between going to work, being in the circus, being in a play, going on vacation and working in a coal mine."[5] Cotter has taught at Fillmore longer than any other teacher, but his various commitments, including the heavy performance schedule of his Blue Sky Puppet Theatre, limit him to one long day a week at the school. Though his puppet shows are designed for young children, at Fillmore he teaches sixth- through eighth-graders. His film, video, and cartooning classes run nonstop from 8:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. for middle-school students, who favor the repartee, the quick humor, and the constant, exhausting quest for "ideas that work."

Current events—in students' lives and in Washington politics—provide ready material for each class. One week in April, "products" from classes included cartoons (a man falls overboard and saves himself by inflating a dollar bill) for "Hardy Har Har," one annual student magazine; videotapes dealing with common events plumbed for meaning, like "Diaper Rash" (turning the tables on authority figures, in this case parents and the babysitter); "Pepto Abysmal," about school cafeteria food. In process: a videotape entitled "Brainsburgers," about a shortcut to genius, set in the Oval Office. According to Cotter's report to parents, video production class involves students in the following: conceptualizing a story, writing scripts, formulating story-boards, operating the camera, acting for the camera, directing, and editing.

Cotter picks up on students' comments, ideas, and excuses, both fleeting and belabored. Then he feeds them back, peeling the layers off, constantly digging for significance in the ordinary and the mundane. In Cotter's classes, there *are* bad ideas, and he's the judge. Today in cartooning, where the continual barrage of individual student ideas threatens to bring the class to a halt, he's quick to encourage or discourage. In video and filmmaking, he frequently solicits the group's judgments. If there's a new excuse for not doing an assign-

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ment, Cotter is bound to think of it first: "What's the matter, did your parents take you to the Bahamas for the weekend?"

Other staff members at Fillmore admit that Cotter's teaching style works well with adolescents and that he has the "offbeat sense of humor that the age loves." According to psychologist Howard Gardner, seventh- and eighth-graders probably favor Cotter's classes for other reasons, too. At about this age they relish spoof, parodies, and ironies designed to evoke humorous response from one's audience, and in this they differ from children just a year or two younger.

> Rigid drill is not necessary; what is wanted are recipes that give the child tools for achieving the effects he wants, that open up rather than foreclose possibilities. He should have some questions to ask and some ways for trying to answer them and an incipient acquaintance with standards and with criticism. This calls for the more active type of intervention involved in the teaching approach.
>
> [At this age,] "if we are to prevent the decline of interest in the arts (and possible decline in skill), our pedagogical efforts during the preadolescent period become extremely important. . . . By the time of adolescence, it is in all probability too late to begin a rigorously structured educational program. Instead, one hopes that by adolescence the child will have attained sufficient skills and a sense of critical awareness, as well as ample ideas and feelings he wishes to express."[6]

What happens when seventh-graders new to Fillmore suddenly appear on the doorstep? They will have missed the years of experience in the arts that Fillmore considers essential for rounded growth, and more important perhaps, will lack the mastery of skills that Fillmore insists on. What difference does it make that children from this five-school area, as well as a small number of schoolchildren in other parts of the country, have a solid foundation of skills in dance, drama, music, and the visual arts, rather than "one quick dose in adolescence"? Answers to that question are not forthcoming. In writing about the development of literary imagination in children, Gardner says,

> We all can invent our own story and many of us can pen the novel of our own lives, but very few of us are given to devise new worlds which carry conviction for others and for ourselves. . . . The features that distinguish Faulkner or Dickens from the rest of us lie somewhere in the individual development of each child. But just where they lie, and whether they can be fostered in individuals, [are] question[s] that have so far eluded scientific study."[7]

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STRUCTURE: MORE OR LESS?

At Fillmore, the question is not whether structure is there but whether a particular teacher stresses it more or less. Frye, the music teacher, opts for less. "I don't always know the outcome. What I do know is that each day I will deal with skills, techniques, and application, but not separated into discrete neat little parts." King uses more structure in her drama classes. When King gave a workshop on creative drama for her colleagues, even they were amazed at just how much structure her classes entail.

> I think young children need structure. I have the story line worked out, the outcome defined. But the children are co-creators; they make certain decisions, and I structure lessons based on ideas the children have. It's exhausting and not the most efficient method of teaching. I have to bear the burden of my decision. But I employ this much structure because, with sixteen classes, I would lose the threads of where we'd been and where we are going. If I had only one class, I'd do things differently. But with this many classes, not enough structure equals not enough learning. The children deserve better.
>
> My first year at Fillmore was arduous, but I wanted to invest the time. I spent as much as five or six hours preparing for one lesson, drawing from many literature sources. That did not count time spent making the props I felt were necessary. This year, I've freed myself from the contraptions of teaching. I've put aside making foam swords and striped tents, and painted only one side of the castle so the manufacturer's writing shows. I want the children to know it is a refrigerator box.
>
> I have a sneaky feeling that a lot of what passes for drama in elementary schools is "the stuff." I know. I've been an elementary classroom teacher. The regalia is there, but the sense of creative play is missing. Teachers make props with the hopes that students will "play" better. They probably don't get much into human experience—the props are not contributing to the sense of reality in the lives of the children. There is only an overt sense of learning.

King's untiring quest for sources of material has paid off. This year she's using a book that feeds her medieval drama. "It's what I call a book with a physical scenario. There's a danger, however, in just picking up this book and trying to duplicate the isolated sets of events." King adds to the book's structure a fantasy element, so that narrative can be played out "dramatically and deeply, with innuendoes and hidden action."

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DIAGNOSIS—STRONG; PROGNOSIS—UNCERTAIN

In 1982, for the fourth time in its ten-year history, Fillmore was placed on the list of schools to be closed, partly because it was "a different kind of school," as one is often told: different, because it is the only school in Washington devoted to teaching the arts, kindergarten through eighth grade, to public school children; different because it is located in an affluent area, where opportunities, like small attractive empty schools, present themselves more frequently than in other areas of the city, and where the arts are part of the daily fabric of life; different because its students come from five other schools. Yet if Fillmore is different, it is clearly superior, too, and not only because it provides more formal arts instruction to 930 public school children than most people get in a lifetime, but because the instruction is sequential, of high quality, and taught by an unusually diverse, serious, and gifted staff.

Perhaps the instructional message of Fillmore is lost on other schools in the district, for whom neither the arts nor school survival has been at issue. Perhaps the message is lost on some members of the Board of Education, who see Fillmore as a matter of space utilization. Last year, when Fillmore was added to the school-closing list, the board gave consideration to relocating the program, possibly in a large elementary school. But if this happened, some of the sensible developments of the past decade would obviously be sacrificed, students in the five schools would be left once again without an arts program, and issues of staff, space, and financing would be raised anew.

Fillmore spreads among its fifteen teachers—who may work every day or only a few hours a week—the equivalent of five resource teachers' salaries allocated by the district to the Six School Complex. These salaries, totaling about $130,000 without benefits, buy approximately ten thousand hours of instructional time a year in the arts (at about $15 per hour). Each school PTA adds $5 a year per student for supplies at Fillmore, which came to approximately $4,500 in 1982-83. The D.C. school system pays the school's utilities (operating costs in 1981 averaged $328 per child per year in each of the six schools, as opposed to $1,306 per child in D.C.'s largest elementary school);[8] lends two school buses to transport handicapped children and that are then used for Fillmore students in "off hours";

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and picks up salaries and benefits for two janitors and a secretary, and the hourly wage for Director Mitchell (who took over full time in 1981 when co-director Andrea Adler returned to social work). This year the system lent Danoff part-time to instruct a hundred Fillmore instrumental music students in grades two to eight. In past years, the D.C. Youth Orchestra's school-to-school instruction program served Fillmore, but federal funds to run it have been cut.

Fillmore grantsmanship is first-rate, but Mitchell nonetheless believes that "if a school has to have grants to operate, it should not be in business." In its ten-year lifetime as an arts center, Fillmore has applied for—and received—five grants for $5,000 or more to institutionalize improvements, including two of $10,000 each from the Cafritz Foundation in 1976 and 1978, to be used in purchasing Orff musical instruments and a kiln, to renovate the dance room, and to add a drama stage; $5,000 from the Meyer Foundation in 1979 to purchase additional Orff instruments; funds during 1978 to 1980 from the D.C. Commission on the Arts and the Humanities for resident artists, including a poet, two musicians, and woodworking teacher Greg Bonner, who stayed on as teacher; and $10,000 in 1982 from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund for the school's unrestricted use.

Fillmore used some of the latter last summer to hire Bonner to build his own woodshop classroom in the basement. Up to $100 a year is available from this grant for any staff member who wishes to attend a national professional association meeting of their choice. Mitchell also values smaller donations—such as the one from parents who sold an automobile in South America and contributed the proceeds, and those from the McGraw-Hill Foundation to purchase video equipment, and from the Richmond Foundation to publish student poetry. Fillmore's most ambitious fund-raising event was an auction of two hundred works from local artists in 1981, which brought the school $14,000.

Mitchell describes her job as program planning and implementation; program management (including budgeting, fund raising, grants management, staff supervision, and general administration); community relations; and "facilitation of success in the classroom" (student advocate, counselor, and disciplinarian of last resort). She does not have the same status, security, or salary as the principals in the other five schools, but unlike those principals, she can hire her

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own staff. The central personnel office requires that all who teach at Fillmore have a B.A. and live in Washington. Beyond that, Mitchell is almost completely free to hire whomever she chooses. She has put together a self-assured, hardworking staff of fifteen. Some staff members have teaching credentials, some do not. But individually and collectively, they have a depth of knowledge and breadth of experience about the art forms they work in not commonly found in elementary and middle school education. Equally important, they are creative and demanding in their work with children.

Although teaching positions are usually filled by word-of-mouth, two years ago an ad for a drama position placed in a theater journal drew sixty-five replies. Mitchell requests curriculum proposals from applicants that include goals, teaching strategies, and examples of lesson plans. In her interviews with candidates, she judges how they would fit in at Fillmore, and balances what she reads with what she sees. She thinks that to a great degree the quality of teachers' lives determines their teaching success. Finally, all must demonstrate the ability to tap the experiences of children.

No one sees Fillmore as an option for unemployed artists or "craftsy elementary teachers." Not all teachers perform or exhibit, but some do, extensively; for example, Wendy Woodson, who is also a professional dancer and choreographer, schedules frequent performances or residencies each year in Washington and New York; the musician Danoff and the puppeteer Cotter also have heavy performances schedules. As it works out, Mitchell says it is possible to find both gifted teacher and high-quality artist in one person.

Teachers' abilities and what Mitchell calls "comfort levels" with particular age groups are important considerations. Surprisingly, a number of staff members teach *all* levels, and some who do not, could if they did not have other time commitments. Danoff, who plays the saxophone, clarinet, and flute professionally (and studied violin and cello for years), began full-time in one Washington junior high school twenty-three years ago. "The first big reduction-in-force came in 1972," Danoff remembers. "Then I was part-time string specialist for three or four junior high programs at once. Later, my supervisor asked me to try elementary, and I've been working with embryonic musicians ever since."

Mary Giamatteo, the ceramicist, and Woodson teach all levels. Woodson, with an M.A. in dance education, is also on the dance

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faculties at George Washington and Catholic universities and Northern Virginia Community College. Sue Shapiro, with an M.F.A. in printmaking from the University of Iowa, teaching credentials from Brandeis University, and eight years of studio work, also teaches kindergarten through eighth grade. "Skills, techniques, goals, and approaches differ from age to age, certainly, but also class to class," says Shapiro. "I choose different processes for my own sanity and for balance—for example, drypoints or monoprints or relief prints—whatever I'm not working on in my own studio at the time."

Some of the staff members see teaching as a lifetime vocation, but not at Fillmore. "Since we can't offer job security, I encourage individual development, and then some move on," says Mitchell, "although I don't hire people who intend to stay only one year. It takes longer than that just to work into the program." Teachers are reminded each spring of their temporary status: every May for the past three years everyone received a termination notice. So far, reappointments have cancelled terminations, but their psychological effects remain. "The news gets a little easier to take each year, but the cumulative uncertainty is nerve-wracking," says Frye, who plans to leave Fillmore this summer to take up a new career, after six years at Fillmore and fifteen years of teaching music. King, the young drama teacher, is also leaving both Fillmore and teaching this year. I don't know if the Earl family knows this yet—Andrew and Alexander, nine-year-old twins, and their brother David, age seven, and their parents. This spring, the boys, all drama students, wrote the following "encourager":

> To: Miss King
>
> About: Drama
>
> It is a great experience for children. And it really makes you feel that it's happening. She is very creative. She has everything you need to make Drama. She is very nice and always happy (says Andrew, who sees a wide audience for his encomium).
>
> Mom, I had this neat teacher for drama. Her name is Miss King. I would like to say that I like her very, very much. She always smiles. And she plays games with us (David tells his mother).
>
> She is very calm. I can't wait for Kate to come to her. She *never* shouts. She is a very special person. And pretty (says Alexander,

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who has a more immediate student in mind—his little sister Kate, not yet old enough to be at Fillmore).

Patricia Mitchell will, over the summer, interview candidates to replace King and Frye. Fillmore will be there for Kate.

ENDNOTES

[1]Laura H. Chapman, *Instant Art, Instant Culture: The Unspoken Policy for American Schools* (New York and London: Teachers College Press, 1982), pp. 1, 21, 74–75.

[2]From A. Hurwitz and S. Madeja, *The Joyous Vision: Sourcebook* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 164.

[3]Quoted in Edmund Wilson, *The Theater Experience* 2d ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1980), p. 2.

[4]Excerpts from a journal of Rachel Schiff, second-grade student at Fillmore and Stoddert Schools, Washington, D.C., 1982–83 school year.

[5]Dianne Saenz, *The Washington Post,* November 8, 1982, C4.

[6]Howard Gardner, *Art, Mind, and Brain* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), pp. 217, 216.

[7]Ibid., p. 183.

[8]Memorandum from the Six-School Council, Inc., to Superintendent, Public Schools of the District of Columbia, April 21, 1982.

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Robert Donmoyer

The Principal as Prime Mover

McCLELLANDTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, is a tiny hamlet surrounded by vegetation-ensnarled coke ovens and wounded earth that unethical strip miners refuse to heal. There are also coal mines nearby, but these were plundered long ago, and now stand hollow and unoccupied. Still occupied are the "patches," the former mining towns with their company stores and two-family houses, each with two outhouses and two coalbins in back. Now, most of the stores are closed and boarded up, and cracked and peeling paint forms open sores and scars on the walls of many houses. Children live in these patches, and early each schoolday morning, they come out from behind the hurt walls, step across sagging porches, and climb aboard buses that carry them to the edge of town. There, atop a hill, rests a yellow brick building, a bit aloof from the landscape below.

Anyone visiting German Central Elementary School quickly senses the contrast with the rest of the environment. Colorful student artwork literally hangs from the ceilings. During most school hours, children practice dance routines in the halls; others throw pots on the potter's wheel and fire them in the school kiln. In the music room, students practice "piano" at a six-keyboarded, six-earphoned contrapation called a Musitronic, and in the cafeteria, rehearsal for a student production is normally in progress. Between 12 and 2 P.M. each schoolday, students broadcast video tapes of previous school musical and dramatic productions to the surrounding community from the school's well-equipped cable television control room.

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McClellandtown seems an unlikely place to find such an extensive and robust arts program. Consider the statistical evidence: 22 percent illiteracy, 28.6 percent unemployment, the state's highest infant mortality rate, one of the highest rates of crime and arson per capita in Pennsylvania, and one of the state's highest rates of reported child abuse.[1] In addition, the school district's current superintendent calls the arts "marginal" parts of the district's curriculum, and arts courses at the two high schools have historically been considered less important than—and as a result, carry half the credit of—more "practical courses" like industrial arts and home economics.

School people, as well as members of the community, consistently account for the success of German Central's arts program—and for most of what goes on in the school—by pointing to the school's principal, Dr. Carmen Guappone. This is not surprising. Recent studies of schools invariably identify the principal's leadership as a significant factor in a school's success.[2] Unfortunately, these studies provide only limited understanding about what successful principals actually do, and no understanding about the role a principal might play in the creation of a vibrant arts program.[3] It seems appropriate, therefore, to focus on Carmen Guappone and to examine his contributions to arts education at German Central.

Carmen Guappone is tough and pragmatic, the son of a coal miner and union organizer, who spent his teenage years pulling coke out of the ovens from midnight until dawn; who, not surprisingly, slept through most of his classes until he quit school at the age of fifteen; who fought in World War II and came home a decorated hero; and who returned to high school, graduated at the age of twenty-two, and went to college on the G.I. Bill and a football scholarship. For all his ungentle beginnings, however, he has a surprising love of beauty. Speaking of the antique folk pottery he collects, he says, "I love these crocks. I really appreciate their beauty. They're like pieces of art to me."

A contradiction? Perhaps. But Guappone is a mass of contradictions. His manner of speaking and physical appearance reflect this. The phrases are abrupt, the sentences closely cropped, the tone raspy and assertive. At other times, his voice becomes coated with sentiment, smoothing his usually rugged syntax into an almost childlike singsong. He appears to be taller than he is, but his girth is no illu-

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sion. Yet one can see vestiges of the coke-puller's muscles and the football player's strength. Lumbering down the hall holding the hand of a child, Guappone looks like a big, overstuffed panda being tugged along by a moppet too small for the creature she has in tow. Trying to catch up with the physical education teacher, on the other hand, to reprimand him for not fulfilling his scheduled commitments, Guappone resembles a grizzly bear constrained only by its own considerable mass and force.

Discussions with parents and other townspeople only add to the ambiguity. A parent volunteer in the school says, "You don't have to be afraid to talk to him if you have something that's bothering you or even if you have something you want to try. He's very supportive and easy to talk to." Another parent, however, describes a man who does what he wants no matter what parents say or do. The cashier at the fire company's bingo night chuckles as he reflects on Guappone's work, and says, "Carmen puts his heart in it"; a parent, however, speaks of a man who is "an extremist about everything," and a school board member tells of an administrator whose record of student suspension days during the course of a school year exceeded those of all the other principals in the district—including those at the two high schools—combined.

Staff members do little to provide a more consistent picture of Carmen Guappone. They obviously enjoy working for him, yet they talk both of the freedom and support he provides and of his mandates and demands. It is probably significant that many staff members alternate between calling him *Carmen* and *Dr. Guappone.*

For all his seeming complexity, Guappone displays five rather straightforward characteristics that impact upon the school's art program. First, and most obvious, Guappone's keen professional judgment has enabled him to select a superb faculty of strong and committed teachers. He has handpicked this group—in some instances, has actively recruited them—but has not hesitated to transfer to other schools those who did not measure up to his expectations.

Guappone's skill in recognizing talent is exemplified by his hiring of Jude Stewart, the school's visual arts instructor, whom Guappone wooed away from a previous position by promising her an art room with a sink. Jude Stewart is a professional weaver, so art, for her, is quite literally serious business—a school subject like any other, with

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skills to be learned, concepts to be acquired, attitudes to be formed. She is adamant about not using art class merely for recreation or for making Mother's Day gifts. Instead of such activities, there are mini-art-history lessons as prints are brought from the closet to illustrate how a technique or medium recently introduced to the class was employed by the masters. Stewart also promotes critical reflection, a rare commodity in elementary and even secondary schools.[4] Students taken to visit a professional potter, for example, were told to bring along a piece of their work to be evaluated. For some students, in fact, criticism has become so commonplace that it occurs spontaneously. (When the high school's kiln was broken and high-school students' pottery was sent to German Central to be fired, for example, a group of Stewart's students examined the work and discussed matter-of-factly whether the glaze on a pot was too thick or whether the parts of a piece were appropriately proportioned.)

A second characteristic of Guappone's leadership is his willingness to function as his school's instructional leader—although recent studies suggest that most principals are too busy to play such a role.[5] After another administrator in the district complained that managerial, administrative, and public relations chores left no time to address educational matters, Guappone said:

> I don't mess with that stuff. I tell people all I do is just sit and think. And develop programs. And work with programs. I don't mess with supplies. I have a maintenance man, and if I have any teacher complaints, I call him and say, "Move it." That's his job. I don't do a lot of things principals do. I just think a lot. Like one of the principal's jobs, they say, is to be in the cafeteria, supervising cafeteria, and I says, "I'm gonna supervise cafeteria? That's what you pay me for?" I says, "Why don't you get someone for three dollars an hour to supervise cafeteria?" I won't supervise cafeteria. I'll do the financial management, but I won't supervise student behavior. I don't get involved in things like that. My job is to improve instruction.

Guappone gives some indication of how he plays the instructional leader role—and, incidentally, influences the arts program—when he discusses his relationship with Joan Goldsmith, the school's music teacher.

> [Joan] came in here thinking that no one could sing a solo, that they don't have a range enough to sing a solo, the kids. And I says, "You're going to have to prove that to me because my daughter was two years old and just

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sang like a canary. I sat there and enjoyed it." She came in here about eight years ago—a very traditional person. I pushed her and pushed her and extended her. She got very angry with me. She doesn't like me to use my authority because I force her to do things. Sometimes I'm angry. I say this is what we're going to do. And sometimes I put my arm around her and give her personal closeness and a hug. And sometimes she says, "It can't be done." And I says, "Well, you will have to prove to me that it can't be done, and I'll accept it." And she always comes up with it and proves herself wrong. She's highly successful and highly respected in the community, and she knows that I was part of it.

In a separate interview, Goldsmith confirmed that she is frequently put off by Guappone's authoritarian ways, but acknowledges her debt to him.

I don't think I would have thought about teaching dance, teaching guitar, and teaching piano. I mean I would like to have. I like doing these things. But I don't know if in a school situation I would have fought the principal and the administration to have all these things, even though I think they're important. Now I would, now that I have confidence about what can be done and I know what I can do.

A third characteristic of Guappone's leadership is his effort to foster community among his staff, what he calls *esprit de corps*. Community is fostered in part by Guappone's "team-management system." A representative from each grade level serves on a school-wide team that meets with Guappone once a week to make decisions affecting the entire school. In addition, all teachers who teach a particular grade level form a grade-level team that meets during a common free period each day to engage in joint planning.

The arts program is both influenced by this team-management program and makes its own contribution to the sense of community within the school. Guappone has mandated that each grade level team produce a musical play each year, and it is during daily team meetings that much of the planning for these elaborate productions occurs. Though arts educators would undoubtedly question German Central's heavy emphasis on productions,[6] they provide the sort of shared purpose from which a sense of community can be built. Indeed, German Central's teachers exhibit little of the debilitating sense of isolation that sociologists indicate is commonplace in most elementary schools.[7] The following comments by a fifth-grade teacher provide some indication of this:

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Everyone has offered their help for this program that we're going to put on, to help in many ways: "Do you want me to watch the students, or help with costumes, props, stage?" There are a lot of talented people on this staff. They're talented in different ways. We draw on each other's talents whether it be in the artistic or musical vein or whatever. We can always rely on one another. It seems to make it not so overwhelming.

The fourth characteristic relates to Guappone's persuasive abilities. He can make his goals and mandates seem significant to the staff, whom he must rely on for implementation, and to the community, whose support is ultimately required. A case in point is his rationale for the school's musical theater program, a rationale that links the program with the area's very pressing problem of unemployment. Most job applicants have the necessary skills, he explains. The deciding factor in employment situations is the ability to present oneself with poise and assurance. Stage presence, Guappone believes, carries over into real-life situations—including real-life employment interviews—and helps students present themselves in a favorable light.[8] This rationale was repeated frequently by members of the staff and by one of the school's parent volunteers.

The final characteristic is somewhat more mundane but certainly no less important than the other four: Guappone is a skilled fund raiser and an expert money manager. The school's elaborate television equipment, for example, was purchased almost entirely with donations he solicited from individuals and local businesses. His cafeteria program, under which, in his words, the "kids eat good," has netted a profit of $24,000, while the programs in most of the other district schools lose thousands of dollars each year. Guappone has used the profits to establish an endowment that he hopes will fund arts education efforts after his retirement.

The five characteristics listed above tell only part of the story. To understand Guappone's influence on German Central's arts program, it is necessary to examine more personal characteristics, including the apparently contradictory behavior exemplified by his talk of team management, on the one hand, and his description of his authoritarian treatment of the music teacher, on the other.

Examining the source of Guappone's ideas provides some insight into Guappone, the person. When he is asked about this matter, he says nothing about the history of ideas but talks instead of his per-

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sonal history—of lessons learned from participating in team sports, from working as a classroom teacher and a Title I coordinator, and from watching mothers with their children. ("I'll tell you something. Most of my knowledge and thinking and my school organizational patterns, as far as instruction goes, comes from watching mothers operate.")

Even his doctoral program was experientially based. Because there was no extensive residency requirement, he continued to work as a principal throughout the program. His dissertation was a description of a nongraded approach to instruction that he had developed while teaching a group of exceptional students, and that he later implemented with students of all ability levels when he became principal of German Central. He does not talk of being confronted by novel, challenging, potentially unsettling ideas while working on his doctorate but of ideas already acquired through personal experience being confirmed and sanctioned. "The doctoral program gave me support," he says. "My advisor made me think I was great."

Insight into the source of Guappone's thinking is important for two reasons. First, such insight helps account for the contradictory actions: folk wisdom does not require logical consistency and frequently incorporates antithetical positions. Second, the realization that Guappone's thinking is experientially based suggests a strategy for making further sense of elusive personal characteristics. The culture that helped shape Guappone's experiences should provide clues for organizing the complexity and the seeming contradictions.

McClellandtown's culture is largely a legacy of mining, union organizing, and, especially, the poverty that has always characterized the area. The culture often exhibits a harshness and belligerence untamed by convention and social niceties: local members of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, in full regalia, picket in front of the high school to protest a school board decision; policemen stand in front of each high-school auditorium exit and guard each stairway to the auditorium's stage during a public meeting to discuss the board's decision.

The influence of the culture's harsher aspects is evident in Guappone's frequent talk of fighting and battles. "We have a team meeting, and we make a decision," he says. "And when we decide it, we know we're right, and we fight for it. We stick with it." When a

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battle is lost, he says, "I lie down and bleed awhile, and then get up and fight again."

Guappone fights in several ways. He is persistent: German Central is the only elementary school in the district with its own full-time music and arts teachers—simply because Guappone asked for this additional staff repeatedly, until his request was granted. He is overpowering; as one of his teachers put it, "He's a very verbal person, and if you've got him on your side, you've got something loud." He can be vindictive: a mother who complains that the school overemphasized television production at the expense of its academic program is told that her son will never appear on television again, despite the mother's plea that her son needs the television experience to build his self-confidence. And Guappone can be, in his own words, subversive: should the superintendent do away with elementary school music, as he often threatens, thereby relegating Goldsmith to a classroom teaching position, Guappone would, he says, simply reallocate resources internally so she could continue to be the school's music teacher.

Possibly Guappone's most effective tactic is what he calls "taking authority." Guappone once sent a letter home with each student severely criticizing a member of the school board who had strongly disapproved of many aspects of the school, including its arts program. Guappone did not ask permission to send the letter; "If you ask for permission," he argues "someone can say yes or no. If you don't, all they can do is give you hell."

A similar incident occurred during an interview. A staff member, the special education teacher, interrupted to review procedures for officially requesting release time from the district office to accompany several of her students to the statewide Special Olympics. Guappone told the teacher not to bother with procedures because he was pleased with her desire to go and would make sure her classes were covered. When asked why he did not simply have the teacher follow established procedures, he responded:

> I like authority, O.K., and authority is something you take, not something someone gives you. And I take all I can get. And I don't really care to say that I have to ask someone. I'm the principal, and I feel that that's my decision, and I want my teachers to feel that way, that they're my decisions. A principal has to have authority, you know, and you just can't function without authority. You can't tell the teacher or anyone, "Well, I'll have to

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check on it, or I'll have to do this." And I always tell them O.K. And I'm positive I can do what I want to do, you know. I do what I want to do anyhow. [If] you just can't make a decision, your word isn't worth anything. If I'm going to do all the things I do, they have to look at me and know that I'm the person that says it's O.K.—regardless!

Guappone's combative spirit is obviously useful in confronting an external environment that is often hostile to the school's arts program; it also appears to influence the internal life of the school. Because Guappone has generally been successful in "taking authority," his teachers feel protected and therefore able to promote curricular areas, such as the arts, even when such efforts are criticized by parents, teachers in other district schools, and the district's central administration. A parent complaint about too much time being spent on play production, for example, delivered by the superintendent, caused little concern among the faculty.

Guappone's fighting spirit also serves as a model for those within the school and encourages them to fight for various things they believe in, including the arts program. One parent volunteer notes,

I used to be really backward, and I got more confidence working here. If you believe something, even if someone else is against you, if you have a gut feeling, you go ahead with it. I think that's the way he is. If he feels [something is] right for the kids, he goes with it. Even if he gets some flak, he sticks to his guns and goes with it. And I think he instills that in other people.

Finally, Guappone's authoritarian ways give him considerable leverage over what goes on in the school. When asked what he would do if the teachers refused to obey his mandates to produce a yearly play, he replies, "I don't think they would tell me that, because they know I wouldn't accept it."

Adversity can breed solidarity as well as belligerence, and in McClellandtown, a sense of family plays counterpoint to harsher cultural forces. Family allegiances are strong in McClellandtown: a young woman, typical of many capable young people who move away from the community but in time come back, indicates that she has come back largely because the support of a family is the only thing that can be counted on in life. Family imagery can also be used to characterize other relationships within this culture: a man and his friend stop working on the man's house long enough to tell how an

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older man in the community made an unsolicited loan (with virtually no interest) so the house could be bought, and how, after the house was bought, friends came over every night for weeks to help "fix up" the place.

Family relationships are clearly important to Carmen Guappone. He tells of a time, early in his career, when he was offered a job in Maryland for nearly twice the amount of money he was making in western Pennsylvania. He was set to take the position until he realized he would never again be able to watch his brother wrestle in high-school matches. He talks, too, of his parents, especially his father, who influenced him greatly. "You know, fathers teach everything," he says, and then he talks of the time he sent that letter criticizing the hostile school board member, regretting his action because his father would not have approved:

> Somebody was doing something to my dad and then they asked my dad for help, and I says, "What in the hell are you gonna help him for?" I says, "He does all this to you and treats you so badly. Why are you going to help him?" He says, "Well, I don't want to become like him." And I became like [that school board member] for that time, and that was bad.

Guappone frequently uses family imagery when the discussion turns to professional matters. He speaks disapprovingly of a teacher who distances herself from her students: "They don't go near her. And that's bad. If you're living one hundred and eighty days, seven hours a day, with someone, you ought to have a close relationship. You've got to be a family." Of his own role as principal, he says, "I hate to say it, but I think people think of me as fatherly." Later, in a discussion of how he gets his teachers to do what he wants, Guappone acknowledges the appropriateness of the father metaphor:

> How can you refuse to work cooperatively with someone when they're so good to you and so nice to you, and they care for you so much, you know? And it is a little fatherly. How can you refuse your father? Well, how can you refuse a principal-father anything when you're so close to each other?

These comments suggest a manipulative as well as paternalistic administrator, just as many of Guappone's actions appear designed for manipulation. His constant praise of his staff, for example, could easily be characterized as positive reinforcement. There is also Guappone's tendency to bend the rules about such things as teacher arrival

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and departure time. Of such rule-bending, Guappone says, "I'm going to get back twice as much or more by that personal closeness bit."

Manipulation, however, is not really an appropriate term to characterize his activities if one tries to enter Guappone's frame of reference and see things from his paternalistic perspective. One point of entry into this perspective is his often-used term, *personal closeness.*

Initial probing produces only a nebulous definition of personal closeness: "an interpersonal relationship between people." In time, however, he distinguishes between two types of personal closeness: "personal closeness as strategy" and "friendship-type personal closeness." The former, says Guappone, is normally short-term; "it ends when you get what you want." Interestingly, he has trouble providing an example of this sort of personal closeness and finally uses as an example a hypothetical case: he should have used the strategy sort of personal closeness on the school board member he publicly criticized.

The second type of personal closeness "involves friendship and caring for each other. You enjoy being with each other." Such closeness develops only through long-term endeavors, such as gentle teasing and "sitting down and talking and talking and talking." He cites as examples his continuing concern for a member of the faculty who wants very much to have a baby but cannot become pregnant. He talks, too, of holding a child one day, a child who may have a serious bone disease and whose arm had "terrible cramps." He says:

> I tried to massage [the arm] and I just couldn't get [the cramp] out. So she just put her arms around me and I just held her until her mother came. She doesn't have a father, you know, and it was very acceptable for her to hug me. Like your daughter when she's crying, she'll just hug you.

He adds, "Teachers do things like that. I have had teachers just hug me when they are upset." Once during a conversation, Guappone was especially concerned about one of his teachers:

> His mother's very ill, and he cries and cries. And I try to help him because my mother and dad both died lately, and Susan (Guappone's daughter) was sick, and my mother-in-law died, and I just went through a lot of that. So I know how difficult it is when you're in that position. You don't know what's going to happen. Your mind runs away with you. He tries to be

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strong, but he's not. You know, he just broke down. He needs help, and you've got to help him.

As he talks, the line between strategy and sensitivity begins to blur, and a new term, *personal closeness for growth,* creeps into his conversation; but it is not at all clear under which of the two categories this newer one should fall. The example he gives—of how his long-term conversations with an insecure first-grade teacher helped her to build up her confidence—suggests that he was motivated both by a professional need to make her into an effective teacher and by a concern for her personally.

This same blend of strategy and friendship marks his relationships with parent volunteers. He talks of gently teasing two of them, and of how he and another volunteer, who had recently come back to the area and bought a small farm, "sit down and talk farming all the time." Why does he do these things? First, he says, he likes the parent, and then, "I like farming, too." He adds, however, "I'm interested in her working, too. I like [the volunteers], and they know it. And they work their butts off for us, free. Hours and hours and hours! Volunteer time. You can't inspire people if they don't know you like them." This same blend of strategy and friendship is at times served up to members of the faculty: "Sometimes I'll have someone break down, you know, and they come in all upset, crying. You get all sorts of problems, home problems, they bring in. Then you say, "How can I make them productive?" I have to listen. That's where you're fatherly and grandfatherly."

Eventually the line between strategy and friendship forms of personal closeness is erased completely. In time, Guappone spells out certain defining characteristics of the personal closeness relationship that preclude its use for purely strategic or manipulative purposes. One is sincerity: "You have to be sincere, or intelligent people will know you're not." And personal closeness also means being "honest and open with each other." In place of a rigid distinction between strategy and friendship forms of personal closeness, therefore, one is left with only a continuum. What is more, an exclusively manipulative sense of strategy does not even appear to be included on the continuum. Eventually, Guappone concludes that personal closeness will only work with people who like each other; otherwise, "it's false and it's something I rarely ever use."

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Put another way, Guappone can only manipulate his friends. This restriction is really not so strange if the world is viewed through his eyes. He lives in the kind of world envisioned by Rousseau, a place where the individual good and the common good are inextricably linked, and where self-interest can only be realized through shared communal purposes. Of course, Guappone's world was not constructed by reading Rousseau. His vision of a world where a leader can simultaneously serve his own interests, the group's interests, and the interests of each individual member comes from a different source:

> It comes from athletics. I was involved in athletics a lot in the army, you know. And that's what the army does to you. You know, you charge that damn enemy and kill them and that's *esprit de corps*. That's for your country, you know. There's no personal goal involved. You're fighting for your school, see, and you have to have that type of spirit. When you have that type of spirit, you can do anything.

The story of Carmen Guappone's influence on German Central's arts program is the story of multiple, often somewhat contradictory professional and personal characteristics. All of the characteristics that have been discussed here, however, are not of equal importance. German Central's music teacher provides some indication of priority:

> In spite of all the differences I have with him, I still like him as a person and I think I work for him for that reason. He's a friend, too. He gets involved with us, you know. He comes in the room and sits down and just has a nice conversation with us. And he likes you. And he talks to you and treats you like a person, not like he's the boss, even though he says he's the boss and I call him the boss and he is. He's not one that can't be touched.

Such personalized leadership, like so many of Guappone's characteristics, seems a bit quaint. It may well be that Guappone is an anachronism, a mere vestige of a time before school administrators aspired to become effective managers, efficient technicians, and pragmatic politicians with no passionately held educational beliefs of their own. There are those, however, who value the human dimension in organizational life, either for its own sake or for what such a dimension can accomplish. For such individuals, Carmen Guappone's leadership will probably serve more as a model for the future than as an artifact of the past.

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ENDNOTES

[1]Statistics are for Fayette County, Pennsylvania. With the exception of the unemployment statistic, all figures are taken from "Welfare Law Passage Ironic Timing for Area," by G. Orsini, *Herald Standard,* Uniontown, Pennsylvania, May 16, 1982, A-3. The unemployment statistic is for the month of January 1983, and was provided by the Office of Employment Security in Uniontown.

[2]See, for example, D. Clark, L. Lotto, and M. McCarthy, "Factors Associated with Success in Urban Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 61 (1980): 467-70; D. Mackenzie, "Research for School Improvement: An Appraisal of Some Recent Trends," *Educational Researcher* 12 (1983): 5-17; and T. Clark and P. McCarthy, "School Improvement in New York: The Evolution of a Project," *Educational Researcher* 12 (1983): 17-24.

[3]The literature of effective schools generally provides only vague discussions of the principal's leadership (e.g., the principal sets clear goals, creates a positive climate, and leads by example). Furthermore, effectiveness in this literature is generally defined narrowly, in terms of standardized achievement test scores.

[4]See, for example, J. Goodlad, *A Place Called School* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1983).

[5]Descriptive studies suggest most principals' time is filled with such things as attending to organizational maintenance needs and interacting with students and teachers on noninstructional matters. See, for example, K. Peterson, "The Principal's Task," *Administrators Notebook* 26(1977-78): 1-4; V.C. Morris, et al., *The Urban Principal: Discretionary Decision-making in a Large Educational Organization,* Report of an NIE-funded project (Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, 1981).

[6]Those who write about drama and children tend to distinguish between children's theatre, which is a production-oriented activity engaged in by adults for children, and children's drama, which involves the improvisational acting out of stories and situations by children in workshop settings. The latter is preferred because a workshop setting is believed to free children from the need to please an audience and the need to be concerned with technique. As a result, children are free to develop, in Stanislavski's words, "the creativeness of an actor which must come from within." Critics of German Central's performance orientation, however, might consider Stanislavski's comments on his own childhood performing: "Our work brought us a great deal of outer technical craftsmanship. We began to speak more clearly and to act more definitively. This in itself is a result not to be sneered at." *My Life in Art,* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1980), p. 70.

[7]For discussions of the isolation of teachers and the problems isolation causes for both individuals and organizations, see: D. Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); S. Sarason, *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971).

[8]Whether there is an empirical basis for this rationale could not be determined, of course. Stage presence, however, is no more an unsubstantiated index of success in later life than are standardized achievement test scores: Attempts by researchers to establish the validity of such scores as a predictor of later success have failed.

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William G. Durden

Lessons for Excellence in Education

"DO NOT TRY TO BE THE BEST, but *do* the best." "The arts are not democratic. If you don't demand discipline and force, everything just falls apart." "There is simply no room for mediocrity here. Perfection is what these kids want, and perfection is what they will get." These statements represent just a few of the thoughts—concrete, highly opinionated, and spoken with overwhelming conviction—shared freely with students, staff, or any visitor to the Northside High School of the Performing Arts in Atlanta, by its founder and instructional coordinator, Billy Densmore. His conversation is peppered with words like excellence, image, sophistication, perfection, hard work, and discipline, all wrapped securely in compact aphorisms. Densmore is a teacher (Georgia's Teacher of the Year in 1981), an innovator, and a fighter, whose experience has convinced him of certain truths in the arts, in education, and in the pursuit of excellence. The story of the Northside High School of the Performing Arts is a reflection of those factors that have ensured excellence in performing arts education at just one school. But to a greater extent, it is a testament to those elements, held in dynamic tension, that are present when any attempt is made to establish excellence in education, whether in the arts, in academics, or in athletics.

Billy Densmore is a charismatic person whose high level of energy, personal integrity, social commitment, and overwhelming drive to succeed, developed early in life, have compelled him to move forward. An unhappy home life gave him the determination to rise above his circumstances and to seek an outlet for personal enjoyment

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and, possibly, some relief from conditions at home. He found these in music.

Church and school became the mainstay of Densmore's early years and have remained so all his life. His days at school and his after-school hours were filled with musical activities. In 1953 he entered Mercer University as a theology student, only to transfer the next year to Georgia State University as a music major. "Being with people and experiencing music were the two things I wanted to do most in life," Densmore says. "Church music affected me greatly. I formed a close attachment to church when I was very young, probably because of my family problems." After his parents were divorced, he had a long uphill financial struggle to finish his education, and he supported himself by serving various churches as music and youth director, graduating in 1965 with a degree in music education.

During the sixties, Densmore became deeply involved in the Atlanta church integration controversy. In his position as music director at one church, he boldly brought blacks and whites together in its choir, effectively integrating the first church in the South. The church, though, seemed to him to be only weakly committed to reconciling the differences between the races, and as it began to fail him, he turned to the only other institution that had been of importance to him—the school. He became a teacher in the small music department of the Atlanta Northside High School.

From the beginning of his teaching career, Densmore mixed, without hesitation, his religious and social commitment with his educational philosophy. According to him,

> Happiness comes from the development of a person's potential. The students of the arts are not in the class because they are told they *must* be there, but because they *wish* to be there. Arts education carries a further benefit in that distrust among people of diverse backgrounds is countered by the knowledge that each is bound to the other through a common interest. Class consciousness rapidly disappears in a creative environment.
>
> I instill in my students some simple rules to live and study by—don't try to *be* the best, *do* your best; you are busy getting better or you are busy getting worse; music is a holy activity. The same is true of teaching. It is not only instruction, it also becomes a ministry of human need, a chance to *serve*.

When he resigned his church position to go to Northside, he asked the congregation to pray for him, to pray that he "might never forget the real reason and purpose" for his service as a music educator.

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When Densmore came to Northside High, the student population was "exclusively white, with five hundred thousand dollar homes and six cars per family." He sought to break up that structure by the "most natural form of integration"—bringing people from diverse backgrounds together by a common interest, in this case, the performing arts—and, working under the concept of the magnet school, sought ways to integrate casts for plays. Despite extreme negative reactions from whites in the early years, and a principal who at first withheld his support because he feared that the production of musicals would be a financial burden on the school, Densmore produced his first musical. The show was a great success, both artistically and financially, and after Densmore turned over the profits from the show to the school, he found that obtaining permission for performances was no longer a problem. Out of this triumph grew a summer performing arts workshop for teenagers from Atlanta and throughout the state, and *its* success powered the establishment of the School of the Performing Arts—with a staff of one and one half, virtually no budget, little moral support, and an unusual administrative arrangement as a "school within a school." (Northside Performing Arts remains a part of the Northside High School.) Today, the school has a staff of ten and a student body of over four hundred. The school population has also changed dramatically since the early years; there are still some students who drive Jaguars and vacation in Europe or the Caribbean, but there are also those who cannot afford the bus fare home after an evening performance. Yet, despite the socioeconomic extremes, harmony flourishes, primarily because of Densmore's personal dedication to equality, his insistence on excellence, his refusal to accept mediocrity. His success in using the school as a forum for racial integration has confirmed for him the leadership role he believes the schools can take in contrast with the church: "If the churches . . . [had instituted] programs to bring people together, the schools could put more emphasis on quality education. The school has had to be almost a spiritual institution and a parental institution sometimes."[1]

Densmore's understanding of the school as a spiritual and parental institution calls for discipline; for the uninitiated, his haranguing of students, his constant demand for excellence in both academics and performing arts, and his candid evaluations of ability could seem an affront to personal dignity and destructive of youthful potential. He

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is tough on his students because he wants them to succeed. He wants to bring them to a total awareness that includes the need to learn how to sit, listen, and, in many cases, speak properly—to do for his students what their homes do not, perhaps cannot, do. When it comes to the arts and the necessity for professionalism, he must often jar students from their cultural environment, pointing out the difference between being sophisticated and being a "nigger." A nigger, a term that refers to both blacks *and* whites, is a kid stuck in the urban jungle, striking out destructively—yelling, cursing, fighting—when pressed to perform. "Image" and "sophistication" are words that conjure up qualities that, once obtained, ensure "coolness under pressure" and absolute professionalism. With his bluntness, Densmore is attempting to uncover and nurture talent that is often obscured by cultural restrictions. One young black girl, he believes, holds extraordinary promise as a singer of Beethoven. Only discipline and long, hard hours—perhaps years—of practice, will transform the voice that now inclines to "pop-boogie" into one that is at home with the classics, but the traumatic cultural passage she must endure will open up to her a new world of music and new vistas of professional potential.

Principally because Densmore is as demanding and honest with himself as with his students, he has gained their absolute respect. He lives his life "out loud." He is a teacher who actively pursues his area of expertise, in a whirlwind of activities—performances, working with summer choruses, and conducting workshops and clinics for teachers throughout the United States. Densmore's students admire him for this direction and discipline, but there is more than respect involved. He has given his students something extra—a philosophy of life with clearly defined values. He has surrounded them with forceful opinions to which they *must* react. "In this school," says one, "you're active in everything. The teachers want something out of you. Mr. Densmore, I think he's a good teacher, but he gets on some students all the time. Still, I like him. I like that kind of discipline. He helps us get it straight. I never had a teacher like that before. He works us to death." Another talks about how very different is the school from the regular high school.

I'm really a jazz musician. I like to think of myself as a professional now. If I had not been here, I would have been totally jazz. They forced me to the

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classical. I like that change now. It feels good. Mr. Densmore respects me for my feelings for jazz, but it's not what he would prefer. At the same time I look at myself as having an advantage over the regular classical student. I can walk into any club right now and start making some money to keep me in school. . . . Now, I'm not racial or nothing, but blacks have to have something extra to make it. You have to have just as much and more. It's going to be hard on you no matter what. I want to be the best. This school is giving me the edge. Jazz and classical—two different languages, two different interpretations. I need to know them both. Mr. Densmore is helping me. And you know, I've also learned from Mr. Densmore how to treat people, how to act. Playing is just not enough to make it. You have to learn how to talk with everyone. Those are techniques to learn here, too. You got to do more than what is expected of you. Look at Mr. Densmore. This school is more than anyone expects. . . . You have to get sophistication, to learn how to deal with people, to get what you want. Mr. Densmore, he knows how to deal with people. I respect him for that. I know he stays busy. Every minute his phone is ringing. I respect him. Man, he's movin'.

A special school like Northside probably could not make it without a leader like Densmore, a leader who is strong, passionate, and often outrageous, but another critical factor for success is the leader's support systems. In Densmore's case, this person is Elizabeth Feely, superintendent of the region in which Northside is located. Although not trained in the arts, she believes they are a key element in education and that they are necessary to ensure a high quality of life. Added to these convictions is a more basic one: the arts can help bring about harmony between people. As a white member of the predominantly black Atlanta school hierarchy, she perhaps feels a special urgency to produce a favorable school environment. But she is insistent that the arts are an important vehicle for fulfilling a desperate need among urban students. Participation in the arts, she is convinced, produces direct results in these students' lives that other areas of instruction cannot ever hope to stir—a sense of values, self-worth, and a positive self-image.

Feely sees Densmore as a "genius" in zealous, single-minded pursuit of his vision, often unaware of those he must necessarily run over or offend in the process, frequently skipping over the social and personal interactions that accompany all lasting innovations. Feely is Densmore's fence-mender; she paves the way for him to accomplish the exceptional, making sure he never finds out about some of the

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problems he has inadvertently created—because to tell him might redirect his energies needlessly. Feely has prepared the way for him to exercise his gifts, sometimes with the same kind of feistiness he himself possesses in abundance.

Feely is adamant about the need for a carefully conceived plan to guide any educational initiative, and believes that any educational reform involves the almost instantaneous success of a highly visible product. "To succeed, to convince people of the necessity of what you are doing, you have to *show* that success early. This is critical." A major project initiated by Feely throughout her district turned unused elementary school space into art galleries for monthly exhibits by painters, sculptors, and other artists. The six now in existence serve as laboratories for learning about art and for developing interdisciplinary skills. From kindergarten on, the children are exposed to art, and the resulting familiarity and continuity, not only for the students but for their parents as well, practically ensures that art education will have backing from the community as these students go on to junior high and high school. And these students will no doubt become the kind of adults who will demand the same for their own children in years to come. Feely believes that only by such measured and purposeful actions can the arts survive in a society that is too often indifferent to them.

Community support is a critical element in the success of the Northside High School of the Performing Arts. For Densmore, support from the public comes when it is offered *quality* instruction and performance; the moment a member of the audience forgets that he or she is watching a high-school performance, an advocate for the performing arts is won. Quality is paramount for Feely too, but in keeping with her professional philosophy, she believes that a public is not passively won over but engaged in an organized fashion.

During the forced segregation period in the early seventies—when public confidence in the Atlanta public school system stood at a low point and thousands of white parents were abandoning it for suburban private schools for their children—Feely encouraged parents representing the schools in her area to organize themselves into a group responsive to the immediate needs of the school community. They did, and in 1976 the Northside Atlanta Parents for Public School Association was born. The needs they organized to address were "for a new caliber of school volunteer, . . . tutors to assist children with

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learning gaps [that were the result] . . . of deprived environments, art and physical education instruction [to make up for the resource teachers lost because of diminishing enrollments], human relations committees to address the problems of white flight threatening the closings of . . . schools." The parents argued that existing PTAs were inadequate to meet the new tasks at hand, and that curriculum revision was essential because of diverse needs within each school district. "Councils formed and changes came. Parents came at first to assure their children's safety in this historical thing called integration and then stayed to participate in meaningful ways. Children realized the value placed on education by the mere visible presence of parents in the schools."[2]

White flight was stemmed by the more active involvement of parents in the schools, and certain portions of the curriculum that had been threatened with extinction because of budgetary restrictions were retained. A parent interested in creative movement, for example, took courses, attended staff development workshops, and began a program in creative movement for her local school. Other parents, after intensive preparatory workshops, began to serve as art teachers.

Feely realized that community support could only develop if the public view of education as an ambiguous, impersonal system could be changed; and to do this, it would be necessary to introduce into the schools the flavor and distinctiveness of the neighborhood school. A sense of community *is* developing, focusing on the school as its center. As Feely says, "Ice cream socials, family picnics, field day experiences, curriculum workshops, luncheons in private homes, wine-and-cheese parties, beer-and-lasagna suppers for fathers, are all examples of concerted efforts on the part of an individual school's parents and staff to assist in developing a sense of community."

To help build community support for the Northside School of the Performing Arts, Feely organized an advisory council composed of community leaders, representatives from the consortia of colleges in the Atlanta metropolitan area, members and directors of the Atlanta Arts Alliance—including Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Board—and Coretta Scott King. It is expected that their participation will enhance and strengthen the quality and diversity of the program.

The state university system has also been brought into the picture. An academic-artistic partnership between the school and Georgia State has been arranged to give greater breadth of course experience

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to Northside students. Finally, a newly organized children's chorus, which meets during the school day at Northside, draws children from all the schools in Feely's area. She believes that this exposure to Northside and the program, and the developing sense of belonging to it, will bear fruit in years to come, in their support of the concept of a special school for the performing arts.

In *A New Case for the Liberal Arts,* David G. Winter, David C. McClelland, and Abigail J. Stewart draw the conclusion that students develop motivation for leadership out of a new vision of themselves. "Instruction in techniques may facilitate the growth of the *skills* of leadership, [but] it does not seem to produce the relevant motivation to *use* these skills appropriately. . . . Is it ever possible," they wonder, "for a legitimate sense of being special to arise from an institution's special characteristics (such as a unique location or an outstanding program), from its unique engagement in the problems of our society—or of our psyches, our economy, or our world polity—or even from the unique rhythm of excitement and discipline of intellectual inquiry itself?"[3]

The Northside High School of the Performing Arts answers this question affirmatively in at least two ways. Its instructional program for the performing arts is unusually extensive and provides students a comprehensive preprofessional training. The curriculum is divided into six divisions: music theater, instrumental, drama, dance, technical theater, and, finally, Tour Show, a special Broadway Professional Training program that encompasses song, dance, acting, orchestra, and stage setting. Students are instructed in methods and in theory, and receive at least two hours of instruction daily in their major area of concentration. The curriculum within the school also attempts to provide students with a comprehensive education by interrelating various topics. For example, the life and works of Shakespeare and other classic playwrights are studied in view of the concepts covered in two other performing arts courses, the basic principles of dramatic theory as they relate to radio, film, and television, and a course on scriptwriting. The experience culminates in the performance of the students own scripts.

The Tour Show, which contributes directly to the students' feeling of specialness, is a regular division of the course of studies and is intended to develop the singing, acting, dancing, and stage manage-

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ment techniques of students through professional opportunities in an original musical revue. It is a mark of distinction within the school to participate in the program, since students must pass through a competitive, arduous audition process, and if selected, sign a nine-month contract for travel and performance. This document, in its comprehensiveness and strictness, underscores the professionalism encouraged at Northside.

The final day for selection of students for the show is traditionally one of high drama. All the students who have auditioned line up on stage, and those who have been selected step forward as Densmore calls out their names. For those who are rejected, there is, of course, intense disappointment, but for many, the feeling is somewhat abated by the knowledge that there is always next year.

That students can and do perform regularly contributes to the specialness of Northside. More than fifty performances are given each year at clubs, schools, and churches, and the students have toured throughout the United States and Europe. In 1981 the school organized three programs for the Tour Show: *Hallelujah Hollywood,* a tribute to movie musicals from the twenties to the present; *Roll Call,* a play that drew on material developed directly from the students' own lives; and Leonard Bernstein's *Mass,* performed in celebration of its tenth anniversary.

The unique rhythm of excitement and discipline of inquiry that Densmore and his staff bring to the program contributes to the feeling of specialness at Northside. He and the staff demand quality from the students and leave no room for compromise. In an interview in the *Atlanta Weekly,*[4] Densmore said, "I find student potential to be overwhelming and the responsibility of the teacher almost frightening. Students can achieve the standards of a Robert Shaw chorus if the teacher sets and demands them"—a course of action that the students at Northside respond to favorably on the whole. One said, "I'm proud to be here. You know, here there is something demanded of us. The whole faculty, Mr. Densmore, the other kids, they all believe we are going to succeed. We are different." Another comments, "Everyone has a mutual interest here. In some schools, people like math or foreign languages or science, but here, we're all a family. The arts are our cause. They're dying and we're coming together to fight for them. You have to feel special."

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Because the school exists in the real world, it is not without its problems, some of which are the direct results of its success as a performing arts school. Students of the school of performing arts attend academic classes for four hours a day at the Northside High School, which is located on the same campus. Northside High is in itself a quality secondary institution. Bill Rudolph, who is principal of both schools, speaks proudly of five consecutive years of improvement in the California Achievement Test scores, a 50 percent increase in SAT scores in five years, and the school's academic ranking in the top quartile statewide. Yet, while he is encouraged by the attention being given Northside because of the Performing Arts School's success, it is not without a trace of uneasiness. He worries about the school becoming known as a "song-and-dance" institution, and is adamantly opposed to any plan to permit the art school to have its own academic support services, arguing that the goals and objectives of the students would then be too limited. In addition, the isolation of the performing arts students from the rest of the academic population might seriously weaken the school's academic program. For Rudolph, the academic setting is not theatrical: "These kids have to learn that college can also involve sitting quietly in a classroom with fifty people and taking notes." There is a problem here—and a very serious one—that involves the perpetuation of the myth about the nature of the arts and their relationship to other "more serious" disciplines. The issue can best be approached by contrasting selected classes that some of the performing arts students attend.

The performing arts students are immediately recognizable as they enter the mathematics classroom before the first bell. They are all quietly humming one of the compositions they are practicing during the arts section of their program, and sit together directly in front of the teacher. As the class begins, they stop humming and direct their attention toward the teacher. A traditional instructional period follows, in which the students are required to answer only the questions on two pages of a mathematics assignment. The teacher leans passively against the blackboard, gripping her book in front of her, keeping students squarely at bay. If a student's answer is muffled, she makes no attempt to correct the poor speech habits. The students' distinctive personalities seem to have no place in the learning process. Throughout the lesson, the teacher sighs deeply; she appears to be teaching math "by exhaustion."

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Contrast the tedium of that scene with the energy and total involvement of this: The instructor lunges at the students with all of his body to make a point. He is aggressive, and yet at the same time inspires confidence. "Come on, bite in! Come on! You, Tom, the bass, I'll cue. Come on. Trust me. This is a most difficult piece, I know, but by God, a rest. Do you know what that means then? We have got to make music, not just play notes. If you don't play music, you might as well hang it up."

(This juxtaposition is intended to make a general observation. There are, of course, lively, stimulating academic classes at Northside, but they are, on the whole, not as overtly engaging of these students as the performing arts classes.)

The difference between academic experience and the arts instruction is at times enormous. The performing arts students live in two worlds with conflicting demands, and little attempt is made by the school administration to integrate the two experiences. In a performing arts class, for example, students are encouraged to walk in particular ways according to which part of the body is leading—the hands, the back of the head, the nose. The instructor intercedes constantly with references from American and English literatures to illustrate a particular walk—"The back of the head heavy, driven, out of joint. Think of O'Neill's *Hairy Ape*." Yet, when asked to what extent their performing arts skills are utilized by teachers and classmates in the regular academic curriculum, the answer is, "None." The failure to integrate the arts with the academic curriculum closes off important interpretative and academic experiences for all Northside students.

Much of the difficulty comes from a prevailing view among some of the academic teachers that the arts are frills, that they involve mere inspiration rather than discipline. One teacher said the performing arts students are more talkative in class than regular academic students and, in general, not as good academically. Yet the data show that many performing arts students are academically competitive with other students in the school. Densmore himself constantly drums into his students' heads the fact that music is *not* enough—that to ensure success they must perform well academically. To remain in the performing arts school, all students must maintain an academic standing of at least a C average each term. Some students complain of being labeled "PA kids." When they perform poorly in their academic course work, they say, the teacher does little to help

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them because not much is expected of them in the first place; they are just "art" types. Yet most who plan to pursue higher education can hold their own academically, although many do major in the performing arts.

Densmore and his staff have been working with the academic staff to reconcile the two differently perceived "cultures," and before the start of school last fall, held meetings with each academic department. The inevitable objection, though, is still heard: "The performances take the kids out of class too much." And although better understanding between the two staffs is evolving, there is still much to be achieved. Opening night of Bernstein's *Mass,* and the awarding of a $10,000 grant to Northside for quality and excellence in the arts by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, reportedly drew only nine of the approximately seventy faculty members in the academic division.

Guidance counselors are in very short supply at Northside generally—only three to serve the entire school—and it is significant that despite the large number of performing arts students within the school, not one of the three is assigned especially to this group. Perhaps this is because of financial constraints, but it does signify a refusal to recognize the distinctive needs of arts students, to determine early and accurately their particular academic requirements, and then to assign them to course work that allows them to achieve at their optimal levels in both academics and the performing arts. Such special guidance, according to one sympathetic academic teacher, might also ensure the assignment of those students to academic teachers who at least respect their enthusiasm for life and their professional vision.

The overall quality of the performing arts work at Northside far exceeds that usually exhibited by high-school groups. These youngsters are clearly exceptional entertainers and feel comfortable on stage, moving about with a confidence and poise that comes only when raw talent has been masterfully disciplined. Densmore sits front row center throughout every performance, totally involved, and, as if still instructing in the classroom, carries on a silent but energetic dialogue with his students. His enthusiastic and continuous gesturing guides his students throughout the presentation. Like a football coach moving up and down the sidelines as his team advances, Densmore is *engaged* with his students.

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One could, of course, object here and demand excellence from these students in some absolute artistic sense, object to the "big time" and "Gee whiz, look what we've done" quality of so much of this effort. But given the context of Northside and the effects of its instructional program on these principally black urban youngsters, those objections would be merely an exercise in cerebral self-indulgence. In comparison with most precollegiate institutions, the discipline of excellence at Northside is striking; and for many individual performers, the preparation there has led to highly successful professional careers and will undoubtedly continue to do so. But if what you're looking for is modesty and a sense of proportion and measure in a student's education, don't look at Northside. Modesty and quiet self-denial won't motivate children who have never been praised for their talent and who are only now, at Northside, having their self-worth systematically established.

When examined critically, the abstract words Densmore uses to express what he wants for these youngsters—sophistication and image—can be reduced to a practical formula: struggle lies at the core of everything, and one must devote all one's being to winning with the talent one possesses. His absolute refusal to accept less than what is truly excellent, and his advocacy of hard work and struggle, are intended, I believe, to provide his students with a method for excelling at whatever they do. His actions bear a striking resemblance to a philosophy of individual action in ancient Greece that, importantly for the discussion of Northside, draws together the realm of the athlete and that of the artist. Bartlett Giamatti, in *The University and The Public Interest,* expresses this philosophy of life precisely:

> Two words of ancient Greek, *athlōn* and *athlōs,* shape a third, *athletēs. Athlōs* meant a contest; *athlōn,* a prize won in a contest, and they provide us with *athletēs,* an individual competing for a prize in the public games. . . . If one wins, there is a prize, a tangible mark of triumph in the endless competition. Merit, skill, capacity—call it what you will—must be tested, and if victorious, rewarded. No part of Greek life was immune to this view of competition or to the possibility of triumph. If you won a footrace or a chariot-race, you would ask Pindar to immortalize your achievement in an ode. . . . By the fifth century B.C., what we would call the realms of the athletic and artistic were not separate in the intensity of competition or in the assumption that reward would follow virtuously or in the importance placed on the activities by the culture. The athlete and the artist lived in the

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same world and did the same thing: they both asserted the spirit in order to thrust the individual beyond time and achieve something permanent.[5]

Densmore's techniques are strikingly similar to those employed by many successful coaches of athletic teams—rigor; enthusiasm; uncompromising standards to measure performance; haranguing of players, often to the point of personal reproach; infrequent, and therefore more important, praise for a good play; and long hours of disciplined practice. He and his staff succeed in educating their students because they have taken to heart the dictum of William James that only when one learns to differentiate between what is first rate and what is not does education take place.

These pedagogical practices are significant generally, but are especially so with respect to an academic program. At Northside, a performing arts student remarked that in his academic course work he could "fake it" by hiding behind a graduated evaluation system and by not participating in class activities. Since the poverty of his knowledge would never be made public, he had no desire to be better educated. With regard to his performing arts work, however, he had nowhere to hide. There would come a time when he, and he alone, would be out on the stage performing, and there would be nowhere and no way to hide if he were not prepared. He feared that moment, yet at the same time, knew it would be the moment of greatest exhilaration in his life. And his performing arts teachers prepared him for that moment every day by "turning him inside out" and being uncompromisingly hard on him.

There is a general reluctance in the schools to be as candid and direct with students as Densmore and his staff are with theirs. Such frank evaluations of academic progress, it is sometimes thought, can be damaging to the emotional development of the child—telling a child, for example, that a piece of writing is unacceptable, that a desired talent is simply not present, that a homework assignment is too messy and will not be tolerated. Densmore's results throw into question the conventional wisdom on this score. Students do "want to get it straight," do *not* want to believe that they are being better educated than they in fact are.

The standards of excellence that the school upholds have not come easily. For Densmore, it has been a personal fight, one that he has devoted much of his life to. Careful long-range planning, support

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from the community, an inspirational leader with the courage of his convictions, an athletic-coaching style of instruction, a conception of teaching as spiritual service to mankind, behind the scenes "diplomats," a highly dedicated and demanding staff, the feeling of all involved of being special, and the opportunity for students to perform frequently before a public audience—all have contributed to the school's emergence as a prime example of how students can be trained for careers in the arts. Yet one factor, one person, stands out, a man who demands excellence from all his students and colleagues—for anything less is to him a loss of freedom, the worst affront to human dignity.

Densmore's effect upon the school by his daily actions—his chatter, his enthusiasm, his demands, his rebukes—is so pervasive that the quality of education now found at Northside would, I fear, disappear without him. The implications of this observation are very serious indeed, for if an influence such as Densmore's cannot be institutionalized, it is unlikely that good arts instruction can occur in any substantial number of schools. One can only hope, then, that more and more of his "type" will naturally emerge to teach more and more children. But if this is what we must depend on, then most arts instruction (and the analogy can of course be drawn to the academic disciplines) in American schools will always be less than first rate. Densmore's obsession with excellence is to a great degree rooted in his early years and cannot be artificially created nor institutionalized for others. While many of his pedagogical techniques, including his use of athletic-coaching methods in the classroom, can be taught to other teachers, it is the singular personality employing these techniques, injecting them with a sense of urgency, spirituality, and personal conviction, that pushes his students to high achievement.

Must schools in America remain less than first rate? Unfortunately, yes. We believe too strongly, perhaps mistakenly, that we can attain our educational objectives solely by institutional strategies, by teacher training in schools of education, in-servicing of already certified instructors, and so on. Although severely disappointed over and over again when our objectives are not realized, we remain undaunted; and perpetually invigorated by the idea of inevitable progress, we pursue once again the "enlightened" cause of improvement through institutions, with new fundings and "innovative" training programs

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that have been tried often in the past with only variable success. A sense of institutional limitation would be more appropriate. Perhaps the best any mass form of teacher training can achieve is to guarantee at least adequate levels of instruction, and to ensure that its programs have sufficient flexibility and substance not to eliminate prematurely those persons who bring with them a personal agenda for excellence.

Yet these reflections should not lull these institutions into either inaction or an avoidance of responsibility. Densmore himself is a product of such institutions, and would be the first to underscore a need for disciplined training in pedagogy and areas of academic expertise that these forums should provide. Unfortunately, many departments of education and teacher colleges as they are now constituted neither attract the most able teacher candidates nor provide those they do have with the requisite knowlege, intellectual skills, and understanding to ensure even adequate on-the-job performance. These institutions are in need of a self-examination that would bring about a new order of instruction, to include perhaps, both the formal study of teachers like Densmore and pedagogical techniques and educational practices that he and his staff have used so successfully at Northside. The effect would at least be twofold. First, even those lacking the personal motivation and personality of a Billy Densmore can be taught the techniques he and his staff use, as well as his general educational philosophy, to ensure good, if not excellent, instruction. For example, Densmore's use of the arts curriculum as a forum for overcoming individual differences and prejudices bears emulation, since the arts are perhaps the most accessible to the greatest number of people. In the Northside School of the Performing Arts, the common pursuit of an overriding interest forced students to learn to overcome, or at least control, their prejudices about black and white, rich and poor. As they struggle for a product that depends for success upon pooling the talents of many individuals, they learn to work together and to appreciate others' needs, abilities, and limitations. Few other institutions—the family, churches, governments, and many schools—can claim such success. As one young white student at Northside said, "Sure there's prejudice here. But when we create intensely, anyone who expresses that feeling is immediately checked. There just is no room here for that sort of thing when we have to perform well."

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Second, Densmore's example might encourage those young people who are early fascinated by teaching, who possess a sense of excellence, but who need the assurance through personal example, that such aspiration can still be pursued with consequence.

Finally, those institutions responsible for training teachers might improve the quality of education in general if they adapted some of the techniques practiced by Densmore. There would perhaps be more excellent teaching in our schools if those responsible for certifying teachers would, like Densmore, differentiate between good and bad, by praising one and censuring the other. In practical terms they should, like Densmore—who does not hesitate to tell an aspiring but untalented student that he or she simply does not have what it takes—have the courage to say No to those who lack the talent and necessary knowledge for successful teaching.

ENDNOTES

[1]*Atlanta Journal and Constitution,* April 14, 1979.
[2]Paper presented by several members of the group at the 1978 Annual Conference of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Design.
[3]San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981, p. 179.
[4]"Working Together in the Arts: So You Want to Be a Star."
[5]New York: Atheneum, 1981, pp. 77-78.

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Martha Barylick

Both Artist and Instrument: An Approach to Dance Education

In my public high school in 1963, I learned to play the bassoon, the cello, and the tympani, and to arrange orchestral music. All this I did during the school day. To learn to dance, however, I had to attend a private dance academy after school. Dance study was not even a school "extracurricular"; it was simply elsewhere. The art of dance itself was "elsewhere" for most people, since you had to travel to cities to find it. What you found was ballet—that stunning art performed by beautiful women with foreign names, who moved with unearthly grace on the tips of their toes and showed you stories about princesses, cavaliers, romance, and magic. It was a special cultural event for the birthdays and Christmases of sensitive souls, a jewel for the few. It was appropriate to exclude study of this exotic art from public schools, and natural that those who wanted to learn it go elsewhere. Music, on the other hand, was a more universal phenomenon, a language much more frequently spoken. That it belonged in high school was clearly the consensus of the community. I never once questioned the irony that I could learn something as arbitrary, delicious, soulful, and useless as bassoon technique in school and had to learn my equally arbitrary, delicious, soulful, and useless dancing outside of school.

In the intervening twenty years, dance has migrated from elsewhere to everywhere. Flipping through TV channels of an evening you will always find dance, whether it is Ballet Theatre on public television stations or Miss Myra's Academy on local cable. You can see live dancers in places that would have seemed unlikely twenty

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years ago: in garages, in industrial lofts, in art galleries, at community colleges. There are modern dance companies in rural Vermont and in the Bronx. A trip to the movies will bring you *The Turning Point, Fame,* and *Nijinsky.* A stroll to town will also bring you dance, since normal people are wearing leg-warmers, cut sweatshirts, and jazz shoes.

If dance is physically closer today than it was twenty years ago, it is spiritually closer, too. The settings of modern ballet and particularly modern dance are much more familiar than the dazzling faraway places of many classical ballets. Paul Taylor's *Sunset* takes us to a kind of scenic overlook anyone might stop at or pass by in his travels. Murray Louis's *Index* takes us to the intimate terrain of the neurotic brain. Furthermore, the people we see dancing are much less exotic. Though women still dance *en pointe,* when they do, they convey as often a sense of strength and grandeur as the feeling of yielding unearthliness. A contemporary ballerina who strikes *grands battements* up to her ears, and turns on feet strong enough, as Andra Corvino has put it, "to open a safe," is a real and attractive figure, more so certainly than a wood nymph whose bourrées waft her weightlessly across the stage. What is particularly striking is that so many more of the dancers are men—men, that is, who are no longer relegated to merely "partnering." Among modern dance choreographers, Ted Shawn and Jose Limon broke ground in making dances about men and for them. We now see men (and women) dancing so well, setting—as do gymnasts—ever higher standards for themselves, that their dancing has shaded over into the athletic. As a result, "My son, the dancer" has become a totally acceptable boast.

In the same way that the settings and characters in dance are now places and people we are much more likely to know, what those dances have to say is far more apt to touch the souls and psyches of those in the audience. A choreographer is no longer an arranger of bodies in pleasant formations, or one who, in the words of Paul Taylor, keeps the dancers from bumping into each other. Rather, the choreographer has come into his own as an artist, a composer of music made matter, a painter on the canvas of space, whose convictions about life and movement are communicated through his dance pieces. Thus the content of dance is as varied as the concerns and world views of all the choreographers working today. As a result, we see dances about our social and sexual lives (Paul Taylor's *Cloven*

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Kingdom and *Private Domain*), the disconnected, aleatory nature of life (works by Merce Cunningham), incest (Twyla Tharp's *The Catherine Wheel*), nightmare beasts within us (Murray Louis's *Chimera*), fear of nuclear war (*Scenario for a Limited Nuclear War,* by Myrna Packer and Art Bridgman), and contraception (*Contraception* by Barbara Jo Fleming)—all a far cry from the upbeat pastoral courtships and tragic unrequited romances we were served up in the past.

Besides these works of modern dance art, dances whose intent is to amuse, entertain, and impress us are everywhere—on the stages of Broadway and regional theatres and on the sidelines of pro-football fields. Along with those beautifully proportioned youngsters who grace ballet companies, plain folks have taken up dancing. A look at the *Argus Champion,* the Newport, New Hampshire, weekly, will tell you that under the shadow of Mt. Kearsarge, people are doing jazz, ballet, aerobics, clog dancing, and "movement for mother and child."

In short, the joint is jumping! There are more dancers, more dancing, and more works of dance art than could have been imagined twenty years ago. And dance is a language more and more frequently spoken.

For ten years I have worked in a most unusual laboratory, a full-time dance studio in a public high school. My objective has been to thrash out a secondary dance curriculum that would fit this complex, demanding, vital, and thoroughly modern phenomenon that dance has become. At present there are four levels of dance taught at Mamaroneck High School: a typical class has fifteen students, of whom five are boys. Many students dance all four of their high-school years, two or three times weekly, forty weeks a year. They have made over a hundred concert dances and performed them for public schools around Westchester County, at nearby colleges and community theatres, for cable TV, at New York City's 92nd Street "Y" and, for audition, at the Theatre of the Riverside Church, for the Scholars in the Arts Program in Princeton, at Tufts University, at the State University of New York at Purchase, and at the Juilliard School. This summer a new resilient dance floor will be built for the program. What special circumstances created this success? What, exactly, is the curriculum that was born in this laboratory? How does it differ from other approaches to dance education?

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The first contributing circumstance is simple, but crucial: the dance program has had a studio—the same one—for ten years. It has adequate lighting, changing rooms, and an office, and adjoins a small auditorium. Somewhere along the line the studio has been painted and partially mirrored and had vinyl flooring installed. It is, however, freezing in winter, and the floor beneath its vinyl coating is concrete. Anyone stopping by in January would be tempted to call what is going on in the studio "the dance of the Eskimos in Pro-Keds." Nevertheless, the space is adequate, and it is the home of dance in the school: nothing else is ever done there.

Second, the dance program has developed in conjunction with a larger performing arts curricular experiment that incorporates theatre, video, dance and fine arts study. This collaborative effort has given me close colleagues; together we have wrestled the program into being and together we see to its survival. We do battle with each other (How should these arts be taught? Who should be taught? Where? When? By whom? Which of us gets to spend how much for what?) and, as a group, with external destructive forces (the budget, the retreat to "basics," computer scheduling, vandalism, philistinism, and the cold). What has become clear in all this is that together we are better able to formulate sound policy and have a much better shot at dashing our enemies than would one of us alone. The theoretical basis of the dance curriculum is as much a result of scrapping with my colleagues as of solitary experimentation. As for facing external forces—how hard it is to fight alone! A single arts teacher—one who deals with students' physical, perceptual, and emotional development, who trains them in skills irrelevant to the marketplace, whose concerns are feelings, process, consciousness, and proportion, whose methods seem to involve constructive silliness—is often regarded by outsiders as an endearing but expendable rare bird. But add a few others who share these concerns, and you have a regular constituency to be reckoned with.

Third, and perhaps most important, the curriculum itself had to be invented. The books or curriculum guides for secondary school dance that brought dance and high-school students together did so with the goal of liberating feelings, developing spiritual values, or staying fit. My experience indicated that high-school kids could indeed use such improvements, but that these approaches were based on the assumption that dance was unworthy of wholehearted atten-

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tion. Imagine if chemistry were taught as a path to liberating thoughts or staying mentally fit rather than because chemistry teachers value the subject, understand it in all its complexity, and are convinced that their students can grasp it fully. I valued dance, was beginning to grasp its complexities, and suspected that high-school students could not only understand it fully, but might bring special energies and inventiveness to the art.

A search among curriculum development materials for a more direct approach to dance education revealed that, of the three recognized areas of learning—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—the first two have received substantially more attention than the last. Curriculum guides for "gifted" programs mention "psychomotor" as an area in which children might be recognized as talented, but then go on to give pages of lesson plans for cognitive enrichment only.

What might account for the dearth of curriculum resources for psychomotor learning in general and for dance education of adolescents in particular? Kenneth Keniston, in the article "Do Americans Really Like Children?" decries what he terms the "intellectualization" of the child. "We are witnessing," he writes,

> a growing emphasis upon the child as a brain; upon the cultivation of narrowly-defined cognitive skills and abilities; and, above all, upon the creation, through our preschools and schools, of a race of children whose value and progress are judged primarily by their capacity to do well on tests of intelligence, reading readiness, or school achievement. Although children are whole people—full of fantasies, imagination, artistic capacities, physical grace, social inclinations, cooperation, initiative, industry, love, and joy—the overt and, above all, the covert structure of our system of preschooling and schooling largely ignores these other human potentials in order to concentrate on cultivating a narrow form of intellect.[1]

In this light, the emphasis on cognition and the neglect of other learning areas in curriculum study is understandable.

Consider, too, the generally accepted belief about child development, that in the post-Oedipal, prepubescent latency stage, there is an explosion of cognitive learning. According to Erickson, the child "develops a sense of industry and learns the rewards of perseverance and diligence . . . and is ready and willing to learn about and use the tools, machines, and methods preparatory for adult work."[2] At this stage of development, the child is ready to defer gratification and get

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down to schoolwork; indeed, studies suggest that there is a disproportionate growth in the size of his brain at this age. Schools are thus at their most successful when children are in this period, and it is understandable that schools charged with educating children during the *next* developmental stage—adolescence—unfailingly look forward to more of the same. As a result, cognition reigns in middle school and in secondary school alike, while dance and other largely noncognitive areas of study are valued only minimally or ignored altogether.

Yet, how clear it must be to all of us that this delightful, bright, industrious child is not the one we are educating in secondary school! How might the high-school custodian, that wise observer of the institution, translate Keniston's specifics of child wholeness? The phrase "full of fantasies" will remind him of the queue outside the school psychologist's office. He will remember washing "artistic capacities" off lockers. Body odors, butchered eyebrows, and splotchy beards don't amount, as far as he can see, to "physical grace." Petting in stairwells and organized cheating are disturbing manifestations of "social inclinations" and "cooperation." And what most approximates "joy" is the limp repose of the between-class smoker.

Biological development of course accounts in the main for this monstrous transformation. Yet biology is neutral. A community's asset, its "children," is transformed by adolescence into a liability, its "teenagers," not because of the consuming physical distractions of the age, but because those who are becoming adults are regarded as (and indeed *are*) "failed adults." This judgmental stance, it seems, is unavoidable. "Adolescents," says psychologist Paul Mussen, "live simultaneously in two worlds, a children's world and an adults', in a kind of marginal or overlapping status, not knowing where they belong."[3] *Adolescents* may not know where they belong, but adults do: they belong in the adult world. Judging them as children will keep them children. The only appropriate yardstick is the adult one—and adolescents seldom measure up.

This issue is the major difficulty in educating children of high-school age in the arts, and affects particularly the performing arts. The years thirteen through eighteen are precisely the time when the child's world of development intersects the adult world of standards. In the child's world, dance is often called "creative movement," and what a joy it is! Among other capacities necessary to development, it

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teaches, as Mary Joyce enumerates, freedom, control, self-awareness, responsiveness, body language, and self-direction.[4] No one watching young children do creative dance would worry for one minute about technique, style, clarity, or intent. Yet adolescents, who live where the two worlds meet, lose the major benefit of the child's world—the privilege of going unjudged. Peers and parents who watch a group of fifteen-year-olds display deep and risky levels of freedom, control, self-awareness, and responsiveness in a dance performance will not approve unless what they see also conforms to their image of "dancing." Here—in the perceptions of friends and families, and in the adolescent's own developing one—is the adult world of judgment and standards.

For the adolescent learner, the transition from the one world to the other is traumatic, since at the outset, every kid is a failure. If you set up realistic adult standards for work in the arts, fourteen-year-olds aren't even on the graph, except for the superb baby ballerina or the musical prodigy. Young children who are encouraged in the performing arts are naturally not judged by such adult standards. Indeed, "encouragement" is usually addressed to the child's ego—"How cute you are! How attentive I am to you! How much better you are than Johnny over there!" In the adult world of standards, however, a responsible teacher would say to that same attractive, energetic, remarkable person, "You are over an important hurdle. You will never again make a dance as bad as the one you just made." There is a chasm between these two types of response to student effort, and bridging it is the job of people who educate adolescents in the arts.

Recently I discovered the chasm made manifest in print. In enumerating fifty psychological principles of child development that most theorists agree on, Goodwin Watson sets forth number fifteen: "During elementary school years (ages six to twelve), most children enjoy energetic activity—running, chasing, jumping, shouting, and roughhousing. For most staid adults this is uncomfortable."[5] The chasm, you see, is the space, the reflective, almost apologetic pause, between the first and second sentences. To those children in the first sentence, we dance educators apply the creative techniques of Mary Joyce, Margery Dimondstein, Jack Wiener, and others; we have children "run to the wall," "echo me," and play in the "moving playground." When we teach the adults in the second sentence, we use the techniques of Doris Humphrey and Elizabeth Hayes: we assign,

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perhaps, compositions "using a steady rhythm of four measures of 8/4 as a base."[6] Just how do creatures who adore running to the wall become those who go home and hammer out a study in 8/4 time? Further, as if that becoming were not mysterious enough, how do they do it, beset as they are by distracting biological changes and absorbing social dramas? Finally, how do they make this crucial transition if the school and community perceive them to be disembodied brains?

The work in the Mamaroneck High School dance curriculum enables adolescent students, despite the obstacles placed in their path, to make that transition. It attempts to bridge the chasm, to transform the "child mover" into the adult dance artist.

Many of you have perhaps been silently protesting that there *is* dance education for adolescents, that *you* took ballet from the time you were ten until you went to college. So did I. "Going to dancing" was what I did besides going to school during those years. But what you and I probably also have in common is that we are female and that our families were middle class. And since so much in "going to dancing" hinges on sex, social class, and perhaps available transportation, it is just plain inaccurate to say that there is dancing for adolescents.

Yet, even if all children did "go to dancing," the learning of any dance technique during adolescence is but one bridge a child might construct across the developmental chasm—one that is likely to deposit her right back on the "child" side. To begin with, learning a dance technique does not by itself comprise dance education. Although students must evince technique in order to be approved as "dancers" by the adult world, technique is only one means to the art product known as "dance." Learning only ballet, jazz, and modern technique is analogous to mastering "brush strokes" or "plaster mixing," without ever making a painting or a sculpture. Studying only technique keeps students in the role of "instrument." It denies them the role of "artist."

Such exclusive study of technique, focusing as it does on the "instrument" role and denying that of the "artist," is a particularly inappropriate curricular choice for the student of high-school age who must find his or her way across the chasm into the adult world. What are the qualities that define citizenship in that world? Put another way, what terms could we isolate that, justly applied to a person,

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would establish him or her as an adult? I suggest eight: disciplined; independent; resourceful; playful; inventive (and responsible for the quality of his or her inventions); constructive in group situations; cognizant of a common good and willing to give in its behalf; and motivated by self-set standards, not by competition.

Which of these, however, are developed by the study of technique? Certainly, learning ballet, jazz, or modern technique develops discipline, since the challenge is to cease behaving like oneself and to begin behaving like a dancer, much as, in the military, the recruit must cease being his unique civilian self and begin to behave like a soldier. Discipline is the essence of this transformation. As to the other seven, exclusive study of technique tends to inhibit them! Dependence, not independence, is the rule—dependence upon the teacher for reinforcement, evaluation, and class placement. And one need not have substantial resources to succeed at learning technique, since the problems posed are limited. It is quite possible to train a dazzling technician who has few resources to speak of. Again, playfulness is often destroyed by technical training. Ironically, gifted children often travel the technical path and become instruments whose range of expression is limited to the grimace of an Olga Korbut. The more mature role of artist, requiring, as it does, much play, is closed to them. "Invention" and "technique" are polar. One young girl, a "special ed" student destined to remain a child all her life, cried because she knew that the distorted, flex-footed jump she was asked to perform in a choreographic study was "wrong."

In developing the skills of group membership, we confront another irony: although technique class places the student in the midst of a group, she is quite alone. To learn in that situation, one does not have to acknowledge that others are there, let alone greet them, find out how they are feeling, or ask what they will do that day. Nor need she notice the sex of her classmates, since they will inevitably be female. This particular aspect of "going to dancing" seriously limits the young person's development as a social creature and as a member of a group.

Furthermore, there is no project whose success can be defined as the "common good"; all giving, all output of energy, is in the cause of individual excellence. Standards for such excellence are simple and competitive. Standards of excellence for *art*, however, are enormously complex—including, as they do, elements of intent, medium,

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shape, style, audience response, popular trends, and the condition of the art marketplace. For the student to perceive herself as excellent at dancing, she must be good at observing a very narrow range of variables in her own performance and in her classmates': the shape, direction, rhythm, and effort of single bodies moving in their isolation chambers of space. But to perceive her artwork, her *dance,* she must be skilled at observing stage pictures, floor patterns, individual and group shapes, temporal development, consistency of vocabulary, focus, quality of sounds, and phrasing, and she must understand, as an audience might, the *meaning* of all these elements. A child, then, can clearly decide whether she is the best in the class. It takes a burgeoning adult, however, to hold forth on the virtues and shortcomings of her latest dance.

That technical dance training is appropriate for adolescents is largely the judgment of adults who are attracted to the "dancer" image as a safe one for creatures in a dangerous time of development. How reassuring it is to imagine one's child arranged with others in neat rows, all going in the same direction, using the same "foot," wearing uniform clothing and uniform expressions, and trying with all their might to imitate the adult in front of them. Given what one's teenage child might otherwise be doing from half-past four to six in the afternoon, this is a rich fantasy for parents, indeed.

An even richer fantasy is available to parents if the technique being mastered is ballet, which, as part of its tradition, trains each student for sexless fairy princesshood. For young girls and their parents, "going to ballet" is in this sense a haven from the torments of sexual development, a development that must willy-nilly go on if children are to become adults. I watch many young girls glide from age thirteen to eighteen safe in the "ballerina" persona, but most are unable to produce dance art, since the essence of that effort is struggle. When they leave me at eighteen, I expect that there will be developmental struggles aplenty ahead, even if the world of ballet accepts them—and particularly if it does not.

Technical study is often the only type of dance study available when a teenager declares, "I want to dance." That desire is a double one: a kinetic itch, the pleasure of feeling herself moving, and the urge toward art, toward the beauty of ballet, the sexy tension of jazz, or the expressiveness of modern. These she has experienced at performances, performances that present the art product—the dance—

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in its totality. What she then studies in technique class is a fraction of that totality: the dancer—personified in her teacher. Aspiring to the art becomes, since it is the only mode of aspiring available, the desire to be the teacher, or at least to be her body, which is the same thing. (As a child I had a recurrent, galvanizing dream that I was Sonia Arova doing great circles of piqué turns.) This fantasy of transformation is probably the goad to most human self-improvement, but in this specific instance, it is harmful to developing adults, since its message, repeated daily in every plié, every turn, is that art reposes in someone who is *not* the student. Art reposes in another; it is the domain of others. If, figures the student, I don't succeed in becoming another, art is unavailable to me. The fact is—and the adolescent starts to realize this as she enters the adult world of standards—that the role of technical artist really is unavailable to her. The real dancer has technique perfected over a decade, and a perfectly proportioned body—and she is lucky to get to perform even with these attributes. There are so few real "others," so few who really do attain art, and her teacher isn't even one of them; she's just a teacher. Under this pall of dawning reality, the transformation fantasy languishes. Absent the fantasy, there is only *what she does* in the technique class that will keep her there.

What is it, then, that the student of technique actually does? She listens attentively to the teacher, watches minutely, and then replicates movement. If she can be, she is attentive to her own processes: to the moments she misdirects herself, to her lapses of concentration, to her spurts of trying too hard. Once she realizes that becoming the artist is impossible, doing these few things is often unsatisfying and frustrating, and no match at all for the richer alternatives of study, social life, sports, or work. Going to dancing is a disappointment for many adolescents, and many stop. Dancing—the joyous birthright of all humans (remember "running to the wall"?)—sours out in the tiny arena of technique; and since dance education is largely technical, it can be fairly said that we educate people right out of dancing.

How ironic it is that adolescents should turn away from dance at a time when the art of dance is flourishing as never before. There is a banquet of dance laid out all across the land, yet the dance most adolescents feed on must taste something like a macrobiotic diet.

By contrast, the adolescent who is studying dance as an art is *invited* to the banquet. She is encouraged to sniff each dish, partake of

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every course, inspect the kitchen, interview the chef, and, whenever she can get away with it, play with her food. All this in the cause of making her own best culinary creation. In the same way, all the work in our dance curriculum is aimed at *making dances*. Making dances is the communal goal, the "common good." It is the duty of the teacher to convince the student that *she* is the repository of art, that investigation and invention, not magical transformation, are what will bring forth from *her* the very thing that brought her to class in the first place: the art product, a dance.

Of all the ways to understand just what "a dance" is, the one that has been most productive is "a movement presentation that communicates the artist's intent." Thus, when a student's function is that of "instrument," his job is simply to express something tellingly, whether it is "I am not moving" or "I am going incredibly fast" or "I am growing" or "I love you." When that student is being "artist" (choreographer), he must give his "instruments" a series of instructions such that his classmate-audience understands that what the dancers are doing says "circles" or "deceleration" or "reverence" or "What an extraordinary day!" This conception of "a dance" also suggests the three roles that students must master: instrument, artist, and audience. Our students learn to dance, to compose dances, and to see dances. The way they learn these is by solving movement problems. If they solve movement problems on the spot, the activity is called improvisation—long a standard tool in theatrical training and perhaps the only avenue to creating dances.

Our students improvise solutions to problems of warming up; following the leader (the basis of learning technique); responding to other dancers; growing comfortable with physical contact; articulating shapes; using phrasing and dynamics; utilizing space resourcefully; and understanding the relationships between movement and sound. Choreographic problems aim at empowering students to use such craft principles as canon (the movement counterpart of a song sung as a "round"); succession (the domino effect); variation; contrast; inevitability; surprise; stage picture; and structures for organizing time, whether they be musical (rondo or ABA) or dramatic. Imagining what this kind of dance class could possibly look like is no doubt harder than imagining life on Mars, so we will look at one group solving one problem.

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The dancers in Carolyn Brown's company inspired the invention of this improvisation problem, which we christened "Store Window." Their exquisite articulation of shapes threw into dramatic relief both my students' usual *inability* to etch shapes in space and their habit of moving from blur to blur in order to "get somewhere." By contrast, Brown's dancers *were* somewhere at all times, the audience able to grasp the whole picture at every moment, as if each dancer were outlined in bright neon tubing. "Store Window" has the primary intent of teaching the consciousness of shapes and the making of them, but it also allows frequent role transitions from performer to audience and back again. In this way, the exercise provides practice in composition, since it builds understanding of stage picture.

To do "Store Window," each student must be prepared with a shape: it could be one he has used in class before, one he is using in a dance he's working on, one that he saw his cat assume last night, one that he saw in the film we all viewed yesterday. (One further intention in this exercise is to teach students the differences between modern dance styles. "Store Window" done after seeing *Appalachian Spring* looks wonderfully different from "Store Window" done after seeing *Sue's Leg.*) At the simplest, each student is asked to stake out a small working space of his own and compose, in a few minutes, one shape, to learn all its details, every *cell* of it, and to practice it facing different "fronts," or directions. The teacher establishes part of the studio as a large department store window and part as the "sidewalk" outside. To get outside, the dancers must walk around the window to the outside of the store (no exits through the glass); they may exit and spend time watching through the window whenever they wish. The first one to enter the window is the leader. She walks to anywhere in the window space and assumes her shape, choosing any front, holding it for any period of time, then walks somewhere else, "hitting" the shape again, holding it, and simply repeating this over and over. She has the opportunity to feel what her shape is like as a soloist in various parts of the window, and it gives the other dancers the opportunity to memorize her shape. Whenever the others wish, they enter the window space and, in their own time and space, each walks, stops, assumes the leader's shape, holds it, walks again. Now and then a dancer will leave the window and become a watcher: perhaps half are watching, half working; perhaps most are watching and a trio is working. The decision to return to the window is the

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decision to change the course of the unfolding art work. Whenever someone in the audience is so delighted with a stage picture materializing before her that she wishes to call it to the attention of all the watchers, she says, "Freeze!" The dancers stop and hold the picture as the watchers absorb it, taking time, perhaps, to have a brief discussion about why this arrangement is arresting. After this, all clear the window, going off left or right. The first person to reenter is the new leader, and the improvisation progresses until each has had a chance to lead.

Each leader, after she has "taught" her shape as performer in the window, is naturally one of the first to leave and watch, since what she is seeing is essentially her choreography. The elements of her shape dictate where the dancers will choose to walk, which fronts they will choose, how long they will hold the shape, with what effort they will walk and assume the shape. If the shape is wide and open, the leader may see paper-doll lines in the "downstage" part of the window. If it is closed and interior, she may see distant groupings and few faces. If it looks like a frame from an action film, she may see busy comings and goings, much like "stop action." If it is a gestural shape, she may see social groups with suggestions of relationships forming and dissolving. Whatever she sees, she experiences moments of empowerment as an artist, a maker of dances.

The problems in "Store Window" are so circumscribed (learn the shape, choose where to walk, where to face front, how long to hold the shape) as to seem bloodless and academic. Such was my fear when I first proposed it, yet it gave rise to such fine work that it seemed magical. Its magic lies, I believe, in empowerment—empowerment, as we have seen, of the leader, and of the dancers. First, every single dancer can master the material in the "dance." So often, as I remarked earlier, work in dance challenges students *only* to master movement sequences; they either get the combination or they don't. In "Store Window," that is a fraction of the effort, the larger part being the use of judgment and discretion: how to do the shape, when to do it, where to do it; how to form this art work by doing a solo, by becoming part of the "decor," by exiting, by entering. If, in the course of another improvisation, someone invents a knockout of a shape, we will probably hear, "Let's do a 'Store Window' on Mike's shape!" And we stop and do it.

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Adolescents who do this kind of work regularly grow in the eight "adulthood" attributes enumerated above. Owning an art product—whether a brief class study or a concert piece—is a badge of independence. Having an idea to communicate and figuring out how to do it is a function of resourcefulness. As to playfulness, improvisation itself is a kind of part serious, part delightful play that sparks invention. Finally, there is no success at the complex communal art of dance without respect for one's co-workers, the desire to cooperate with them, and a shared yearning for the "common good."

The approach I have set forth brings the flourishing of American dance into high school. This kind of dance study may indeed be as delicious and soulful as studying the bassoon, and of all the arts, it may be among the most useful to learn. We are approaching a moment when community consensus will want dance in schools, as it has, in my lifetime, wanted music. To those who will teach it, I offer this work as a beginning.

ENDNOTES

[1]Kenneth Keniston, "Do Americans Really Like Children?" *Today's Education: Journal of the National Education Association,* pp. 19-23.

[2]In Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, *Theories of Personality* (New York: Wiley, 1978), p. 95.

[3]Paul Mussen, *The Psychological Development of the Child* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 109.

[4]Mary Joyce, *First Steps in Teaching Creative Dance to Children* (Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1980), pp. 4-8.

[5]Goodwin Watson, "What Psychology Can We Feel Good About?" in *Psychological Foundations of Education,* edited by Miriam Goldberg and Martha Werle (New York: MSS Information Corporation, 1974), p. 14.

[6]Elizabeth R. Hayes, *Dance Composition and Production* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1981), p. 70.

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Art, Creativity, and the Quality of Education

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, a student approached me with a college recommendation form and a question: Was it appropriate, she wondered, for me to recommend her for admission to this school? She pointed to the instructions at the top of the form, asking her to have it filled out by a "teacher who has taught you an *academic* subject in the last two years."[1] The word stood out like a serious warning, and I remember having second thoughts about accepting the form—because I am a teacher of art.

In secondary education—and in its narrowest sense—"academic" refers to the subjects of English, foreign language, history, economics, mathematics, and science. But in a broader sense, it pertains to the "liberal arts, or to the realm of ideas or abstractions."[2] As I continued to read, I became convinced that this prestigious Eastern university wanted to hear from me as much as from anyone else. "Please comment on the nature and quality of the applicant's academic work," their second request read. "Evidence of strong motivation, creativity, and the ability to work independently is especially helpful."

If these three qualities are the most pertinent characteristics of academic work, then there is no high-school subject more academic than art. No one is pressuring high-school students to study art; rather, serious college-bound students are especially urged to take other subjects instead. Thus, when they do pursue the arts, it is evidence of "strong motivation." Furthermore, "the ability to work independently" is an obvious prerequisite for artistic activity. Although students at work in the art classroom can and do evaluate one another's

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work, and offer constructive criticism, making an original work of art is for the most part a risky, lonely affair; students are expected to invent their own solutions, often to problems that are also of their own invention. And it is common knowledge that "creativity"—the deepest, broadest, most complex kind of thinking—is uniquely emphasized in many American art programs.

Nevertheless, the degree to which the art-making process is misunderstood by parents, school administrators, and teachers of other subjects is a constant source of surprise to most teachers of art. Art-making is neither the mechanistic application of skills and techniques nor the passive representation of visual sensations. Nor is it—as it must often seem to those who have never tried it—the mindless flow of some innate, mysterious, inspirational juice. Like other forms of expression, art is a language, a context for interpreting experiences and constructing meanings. It is the visible manifestation of thought.

CREATIVITY

All children make art, and what looks like spontaneous play is also the serious business of learning about the world—learning to perceive, to distinguish, to organize, to form concepts, to express, to understand. Art teaches us to see actively, to see into and to structure what we see, to think with our eyes. A human being, unlike a camera, cannot look at something without thinking about it. If we consider how many of our "vision" words are also our "thought" words—insight, viewpoint, imagine, study, reflect—we will understand that perception cannot be separated from cognition.

"All knowledge has its origin in our perceptions," Leonardo told us, and Cézanne knew this when he said, "Nature is on the inside." All artists and scientists realize that what we know depends on what we see; and what we see depends on *how* we see. Art inquires into the "how" of seeing. A work of art gives us, above all, a way of seeing, and at the same time, a way of knowing and of caring.

Like the writer expressing ideas by arranging words in meaningful combinations, so the artist gives form to thought by manipulating line and color into new, expressive relationships.

This manipulation of verbal or visual symbols into patterns involves a complex series of decisions. I tell my students that drawing is like playing a game of chess. All chess games begin with the pieces

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arranged in the same way, and all drawings begin as blank pieces of paper. But each chess game, each drawing, proceeds differently, because a different set of choices is made. The player/artist makes a move, evaluates the resulting situation, makes another move, and so on. The changing circumstances require constant reevaluation, and future moves must be planned, strategies developed, previous knowledge tapped, and risks taken. The chess player must try to imagine all fruitful possibilities that fall within the boundaries of the rules—but the artist must go further. He or she must go beyond the "rules" to the very edge of what is conceivable and what is possible, must push to extend this edge, to press beyond previous boundaries, to break the rules, to deepen and widen the scope of the "game," and to fit another piece of the unknown into the expanding realm of the understood. This is true intellectual growth. The goal in art is not to play a "good game" or to make another "pretty picture," but to challenge the old formula, to reinvent or improve the "game" itself through the adventurous use of all available mental and visual faculties.

Going beyond lesser forms of intelligence, this daringly expansive kind of thinking and learning that we call "creativity" requires intuitive sensing; imaginative positing; playful manipulation; waiting, watching, and being open to the unexpected; allowing and taking advantage of "happy accidents"; coping with risk, confusion, and anxiety; and being able to relinquish old patterns in order to synthesize the new, the better, the more meaningful. The creative process itself is

> a long series of leaps of the imagination and the artist's attempts to give them form by shaping the material accordingly, . . . a strange and risky business in which the maker never quite knows what he is making until he has actually made it. . . . No wonder the artist's way of working is so resistant to any set rules, while the craftsman's encourages standardization and regularity.[3]

The creative attitude is a questioning one; it thrives on independence, heightened sensitivity, the pleasure of direct experience, and the thrill of achieving something original. Institutionalized education, while giving frequent lip service to the importance of creativity, usually stands firmly on the side of "standardization and regularity" instead. By favoring the predictable, the efficient, the practical, and the measurable, schools inhibit the capacity for spontaneous inven-

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tion, for fantasy. When Einstein said, "The gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing positive knowledge," he underscored the importance of rediscovering the creative potential that our practical, rational institutions often smother.

ABSTRACTION AND ANALYSIS

Everyone can develop more creative ways of thinking. As a high-school art teacher, my task is not to tell my students *how* to see, but to help them discover the ability to see in their own individual ways. Many people use their eyes for not much more than identifying and measuring. To come in out of the rain, I must identify the door and gauge its distance and direction; to read, I must identify words and phrases by their shapes. Art teaches students to see actively, to think and feel with their eyes, to grasp the visual and aesthetic qualities of what they see. Active seeing is analogous to active reading, where critical, thoughtful reading means not merely understanding the plot, but grasping fully what is meant.

Most students will "read" a painting only for "plot"; once they determine what it represents—what it is a picture of—they look no further. In a museum, they spend more time reading the labels than looking at the art. They are mystified by abstract pieces—angered, even, by what they cannot comprehend—and reassured by representational works with descriptive titles. They look to identify, but not to understand.

Robert Motherwell once pointed out that of the subjects taught in school, mathematics and music are more abstract than art. Yet, most adolescents have no trouble working with mathematical symbols and find nothing especially puzzling about a song that has no lyrics. Why, then, are abstract paintings so bewildering? Why, for example, is geometrical abstraction more acceptable in a math textbook than in an art gallery? Unfortunately, this is largely a matter of conditioning. But there is at least one other reason people feel comfortable with representational art: it has the capacity to imitate the appearance of visible reality. It is a constant marvel to many how the flat surface of a painting can seem like an opening into deep light-filled space, how a figure, meticulously sculpted, can almost be caught drawing a breath. Writers often attempt to match the descriptive power of visual art. Joseph Conrad seemed to say this when he wrote: "My task

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which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see."[4]

Adolescence, nonetheless, is an important time to develop the ability to think abstractly, to consider abstract concepts and qualities apart from particular, concrete situations. In art class, as in English class, students learn to manipulate and express abstract ideas by working with them firsthand. They come to recognize the abstract qualities of all art, and learn that if they do not understand the paintings of Piet Mondrian, they will not really understand those of Jan Vermeer.

With good high-school art instruction, students can learn to see much more than likeness, just as with good literary instruction, they can learn to read much more than plot. They learn how to analyze the structure of a work and to see how this structure contributes to its meaning. They separate the work into its parts—sentences or lines, paragraphs or shapes, sounds or colors—and they figure out how these parts relate to one another to form a coherent, significant whole. By analyzing Shakespeare and Michelangelo, students learn how to admire and appreciate; but by analyzing their own works, they learn how to grow.

EVALUATION

Art instruction has a significant advantage over other disciplines in this regard because students, by working side-by-side and seeing what others are doing and thinking, have the opportunity to analyze, criticize, and evaluate each other's work. As they observe someone else's approach to the same problem, or to a different one, they can react immediately. They question each other, reinforce each other, make suggestions, and share insights. In some educational settings, this is called "cheating." In an art class, it is students helping each other to learn through constructive criticism based on mutual respect. A weakness found in a work, far from pointing to a weakness in the student, is an insight, a revelation, a gift—a clue that points toward future growth and direction. In art, students spontaneously seek and offer criticism. In art, there is no profit in knowing something the next person does not, no need to conceal the answers from another.

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"Evaluation" involves making judgments based on internal evidence and by the application of external standards; it is a vital part of the creative process. Each time a line is drawn or a form is altered, the artist steps back to evaluate this change in the context of all previous decisions, by grasping the work as a whole. The separate, concrete, nonlinear, visible presence of artwork facilitates this grasping, this "stepping back to think about your thinking." One of the most difficult judgments to make is that the work is finished, that the idea has emerged in its best, most final form. The tools are set down, but the evaluation continues: outlines of the next piece are already taking shape in the mind.

In a high-school art class, students constantly evaluate their own works-in-progress; they share informal judgments about each other's unfinished works; they evaluate "finished" pieces in formal class critiques; they receive ongoing criticism from the teacher; and they reevaluate their previous works again and again in light of recent discoveries. We would find an equivalent situation in a creative writing class where students share their rough drafts with one another; read and discuss revised works as a group; receive formal criticism from the teacher in front of (and for the benefit of) everyone else; and continuously reevaluate the growth of their own ability to write.

At Mamaroneck High School where I teach, artworks judged by the art department to be of particular quality are frequently displayed in the high-school gallery. They then receive further evaluation from a much wider audience of peers, other teachers, administrators, parents, and the general public. This wider recognition provides a powerful incentive for student artists. It creates a stronger sense of community, and it allows the department to establish and maintain higher standards of excellence.

How do art teachers grade their students? How can the effectiveness or quality of a work of art be judged? Artists, art educators, and art critics have no trouble dealing with this question, although they may disagree on which criteria to stress. But those untutored in art often have great difficulty with these judgments. They admire works that "look more real," that "seem more attractive," or that show them something familiar. Abstract art seems arbitrary, standardless, devoid of skill and content. Art is seen as a "do-your-own-thing" activity with no definite criteria of evaluation. Beginning art students, incidentally, often try to cover their weaknesses with this myth; they

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may attempt to justify inconsistency, oversight, or sloppiness in their work by saying, "But I meant it to be that way!"

There is, of course, more than one effective way to approach an open-ended problem, and this principle is basic to the creative problem-solving process. This does not mean that "anything goes" or that there are no solid standards for evaluation. Evaluating a sculpture or an essay is certainly more complex than correcting a fill-in-the-blank test. The latter is simply a case of right or wrong: Did the student recall the appropriate bit of information or not? The former requires analysis of a series of intelligent decisions, carefully woven into a coherent, meaningful composition. An essay reveals not only what the student is thinking, but how well he or she is thinking, and how well he or she can write. Similarly, a work of art—whatever the specific content—also shows the depth and quality of the student's thinking, and his or her command of the visual language. The work in both cases can be evaluated in two ways: on the basis of content—the quality, depth, and originality of the ideas expressed; and on the basis of form—the clarity and effectiveness of the organizational structure, and the level of craftsmanship in the execution.

Paintings, like dreams and poems, must be approached with a fresh eye and an open mind. Prejudice and presumption must be held in check, and the picture must first be evaluated on its own terms, on the basis of internal evidence. For if a picture is a vision, a "way of seeing," we must let it show us how it is to be seen.

What is happening in this picture? What immediate, overall tone or feeling is conveyed? What do I notice about it first? How does my eye travel through this field of visual elements and forces? Is there an overall structure that I grasp? What parts do I distinguish? Are they similar or different? In what ways? Do similar parts reappear? How are they arranged? Do they form patterns? How are they related to each other? How do they function? Do all the elements carry equal emphasis or weight? Why or why not? How do the parts relate to the whole? What kinds of decisions were made? What sort of "game" is being played? Do all the elements and forces achieve some kind of balance and coherence? Is there anything within this context that is haphazard or out of place? Is there anything that seems purposeless, unnecessary, contradictory? What interests me the most about what I am seeing?

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A picture sets up its own rules—its own internal grammar and logic—and it succeeds or fails according to those rules. Each picture is an attempt to expand the artist's vocabulary, to create new and better ways of using the visual language. However "accidental" some aspect of a picture may seem, the decision to leave it in must be seen and judged as a conscious and deliberate one; if it is not included on purpose, it has no business being there at all.

In addition to evaluating the work on its own terms, the art teacher will consider it in the context of the student's previous achievements and in light of the goals of the assignment. Although art problems never have one correct answer, they often have different degrees of open-endedness. Like writing problems, many are designed to strengthen specific skills and techniques for using the language. The final product can thus be evaluated objectively, as evidence of the level of mastery of the particular skills in question.

Narrowly defined problems have another important use: they invite comparison of the solutions. Students are constantly surprised at the range of possible responses to the same problem. They are able to judge relative degrees of originality and levels of craftsmanship, and discover differences that do not imply "better" or "worse." These are the subjective aspects of the work that reveal personality characteristics, individual preferences, and the uniqueness of each artist's "handwriting." The importance of enjoying these subjective qualities of the work cannot be overemphasized; the resulting "awareness-of-self" and "appreciation-of-others" proves that individualized instruction happens best in a group.

As for evaluating each student's work in the context of his or her previous development, the art teacher must judge whether the work reflects the student's current levels of understanding and ability, whether the student has challenged himself or herself to go beyond the specific objectives of the assignment, what new territory has been conquered, and how much growth can be seen. In some disciplines, "initiative" is the mark of a superior student; in art, it is simply expected of everyone. It is the only way to ensure the maximum growth of each student.

Every so often, a student will develop a good formula for making "successful" drawings, and will crank out one impressive piece after another, to the great delight of family and friends. The student has reached a certain level of accomplishment and is resting on a plateau.

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The formula becomes a habit, a comfortable rut. At this point, the art teacher must challenge the student to go further, to stretch the formula until it breaks, and to begin building a better one.

In teaching art, or anything else, for that matter, the temptation is to focus on the production of "successful results." Teachers who want their students to succeed sometimes make success too easy to achieve, devising problems that can *only* turn out well, requiring students *only* to imitate or memorize, perhaps even "reviewing" the answers before the test is given. In art, the teacher may tell a student what to do in a given situation; even worse, he or she may actually touch a student's work to correct or improve something.

Although many students like to have the teacher do the work for them, others want only advice and the opportunity to make their own discoveries. The teacher can help a frustrated student clarify the problem and envision some of the options, but leave responsibility for the final decision up to the student. Learning to take risks and cope with frustration is an important part of original, creative thinking in any field; in art, it is *central* to good instruction. The teacher must relinquish control over the ultimate success of the work and become an understanding guide, a source of encouragement, criticism, and support.

Good high-school art instruction teaches students to work independently, to assume increasingly greater responsibility for the direction of their own learning, and to develop the skill of critical self-evaluation—to get art students to "act" like artists.

The true importance of evaluation, then, is in teaching students how to evaluate their own work. They must ask themselves: How original was my idea? Did I struggle to develop and perfect it? How well did I organize the elements of my design to achieve balance, interest, and clarity of expression? How efficiently did I use my time? How carefully did I shape my materials? Did I strive for the best execution, or opt for easier alternatives? What level of craftsmanship did I achieve? What are the strengths and weaknesses of my work? How can I improve it? What shall I do next? What have I learned?

When college recommendation forms inquire about a student's intellectual qualities, their questions always specify the importance of curiosity, initiative, originality, self-direction, creativity, and the capacity to think and act independently. These qualities are nurtured more in art than in any other subject area. In art class, more students

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spend more active learning time doing more different kinds of thinking: intuiting, imagining, recalling, interpreting, reasoning, abstracting, analyzing, organizing, applying, relating, synthesizing, expressing, and evaluating. More than any other activity, art challenges the whole student—intellectually, emotionally, and physically—to learn by doing.

MOTIVATION, CARING, WORK

The other important question on college recommendation forms concerns the student's emotional and personality characteristics: "What are your impressions of this student's character, aims and values? . . . What are the first few words which come to your mind to describe this student's personality?"[5]

In some high-school courses, teachers learn comparatively little about the personalities of their students. In course work that traces a predetermined curricular path, students reveal little more about their emotional makeup than degrees of punctuality, courtesy, talkativeness, neatness, and obedience. When teachers do learn about a student's character, it is often in spite of, rather than because of, the content of the course work. But in art class, students are expected to communicate personal thoughts, feelings, and values through the work itself.

Art is a kind of selection process based on personal values; it "isolates the poetic experience from the accidents and irrelevancies of everyday existence."[6] Making a work of art about something is a way of investing time and effort in it, a way of saying, "This is important. I care about it."

Art-as-caring has powerful implications. Art demands painstaking craftsmanship, and it is this concern that motivates the mastering of skills that in turn increase one's ability to think with and through the material. Craftsmanship demands self-discipline and perseverance, the willingness to supply whatever amounts of time and energy are necessary to ensure the quality of the work.

One day not long ago a student showed me a drawing and asked, "Is this good enough?" Before I could reply, another student jumped in and expressed my sentiments perfectly by proclaiming that "good enough" isn't good enough! We cheat our students when we expect less from them than their absolute best. But by openly caring about

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the quality of each individual student's art, the teacher fosters a healthy attitude about "work."

Unfortunately, most students think of work as something that you have to do, something that you do in order to get done. Work means answering the teacher's questions, doing the textbook's problems, covering the material, getting the grades, piling up the credits, getting out. High school becomes so much "busy work," something you have to do if you want to go to college. Academic passivity sets in, and school feels more like a place where something is done *to* you than a place for active doing. External pressures and rewards substitute for intrinsic motivation, and learning resembles a food that is consumed only for the sake of survival, not savored for the pleasure that it provides. Thus do we attempt to educate "intellectual gourmets" on a diet of "cafeteria food."

Colleges are well aware of this problem; a question on Brown University's recommendation form is particularly enlightening:

> What do you know of this student's intellectual qualities? We are especially interested in any evidence you can give about the nature of his or her motivation for academic work—the breadth and depth of intellectual interests—the originality, independence, and sensitivity he or she displays in course work—the quality of performance as compared to that of classmates. . . . Is this student self-directed or driven by pressures from family or for status? Is this student studying for his or her own satisfaction or for grades? Does this student approach work creatively or routinely? Does this student pursue studies beyond assignments or does he or she have to be nursed or prodded?

This one paragraph contains more insight into the "mediocrity problem" besetting contemporary American education than many recent lengthy studies. It also points toward the negative effects of most college admissions criteria that emphasize grades and scores while minimizing the nature of a student's motivation.

It is difficult for students to derive much pride and satisfaction from their work when it is not really their work. Determining the same answers to the same problems as everyone else, grasping and rephrasing the teacher's ideas, and "covering material" from the same book discourage self-direction and independent thinking. Even class discussions are often lectures-in-disguise—with teachers leading, hinting, and cajoling their own ideas out of the mouths of their students. Students know when the teacher already has the answer to

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the question he or she is asking. Instead of thinking about the question, they will often just try to guess what the teacher has in mind. Students are very good at this game; the person who blurts out the most answers the fastest often has the best chance of guessing the correct one.

The "Guess-what-*I'm*-thinking" style of teaching implies that "I'm-not-really-interested-in-what-*you're*-thinking." The experience of creating artwork is in direct opposition to this secondhand, superficial kind of learning. Art provides a context in which students think their own thoughts, make their own discoveries, and experience the satisfaction of true personal accomplishment. Originality means ownership, and pride of ownership is the key to self-motivation. Art students can say, "This is my work; I made it. These thoughts are mine, not the textbook's, and not the teacher's. The feelings expressed here belong to me. I didn't memorize this concept, I discovered it! I created this character, this symbol, this vision. It's different from everyone else's. It's mine. It's me. And it's important enough to be a work of art."

The meaning of art-as-caring expands to art-as-caring-about-my-own ideas. Education is given back to the students, pride of ownership replaces apathy, and students develop a healthy feeling of self-esteem. Faith in oneself—the feeling of being capable—is a crucial precondition for creative activity.

Educational ownership, by requiring students to accept personal responsibility for the nature and quality of their work, can eradicate indifference. When a student complains that the work is boring, I sometimes say, "You're absolutely right; what you've done is boring. Why don't you stop boring yourself and think of something interesting?" Unlike most television shows, my purpose is not to entertain. I am there to challenge my students to excite themselves and to interest each other through their work.

There is often a lot of talk in educational circles about how to "make learning exciting." As victims of our own system, we are so accustomed to schoolwork being secondhand, routine, and irrelevant that we've forgotten our own role in making it that way. We use the excuse that if something is enjoyable, it can't be work; if it isn't drudgery, it can't be important. This myth is sometimes used to question the significance of art education altogether. But by taking art courses—despite the pressure not to—by frequently working beyond

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course requirements, and by actively seeking criticism from more than one art teacher, our students remind us of the satisfaction in true creative learning. They work not for the course, the teacher, the grade, or the credit but for themselves and each other—to understand, to make sense of and give meaning to, to care, to share. They make discoveries about everything, but especially about themselves. They are becoming adults by establishing a conscious identity, partly through the creation of "work" that is, above all, their own.

* * *

By taking college recommendation forms at face value, one might conclude that colleges must be keenly interested in the creative accomplishments of their applicants, and must, therefore, hold artistic achievement in the highest regard. Yet just the opposite is true. Some colleges give separate consideration to "special talents" an applicant may have; some regard achievement in art to be a "nice extra" so long as the "important" grades and scores are up to par; some even go so far as to cross art courses off an applicant's transcript and then reaverage the remaining grades.

Since colleges almost never require the completion of an art course for admission, high schools—which usually see their main function as preparing students for college—seldom encourage students to pursue the arts. As they progress through elementary, middle, and high school, students are taught that art becomes increasingly less important. When the time comes to think about putting together a transcript that will impress colleges, a second verbal language, upper level math and science, and "AP anything" emerge as major priorities—along with any course in which a student feels capable of getting a very high grade. Making room in their schedules for art becomes a kind of sacrifice for college-bound students, and learning for its own sake inevitably falls by the wayside.

This situation is further complicated by the myth that success in art depends on innate talent. Students who feel that they cannot draw or that they are uncreative often steer away from art to avoid the risk of a low grade.

It is difficult to reconcile this contradiction between what high schools say about creativity and what they do about it. Why are the arts—where creativity finds its greatest emphasis—still discouraged?

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Why are art programs still the second-class citizens of the curriculum? Why are they among the first to be crippled or cut? Why are they academically suspect? If fine art has been one of the "liberal arts" since the Renaissance, why are so many of our educational institutions still living in the dark ages? Why this gap between pretense and practice?

One reason seems to be a simple, self-perpetuating lack of knowledge about art. The students of yesterday, who were taught that art is unimportant, are the educational leaders of today. School administrators receive little or no training in art. Visual illiteracy and the consequent undervaluing of the arts is thus passed along in institutionalized form.

Another factor is the current dominance of statistical concerns in education. In an attempt to compare candidates more objectively and efficiently, colleges have come to depend increasingly on standardized test scores. But by trying to quantify learning, we end up limiting ourselves only to what is quantifiable, and the significance of the resulting scores has become a matter of great controversy. What seems apparent, however, is that colleges attach far more weight to standardized test scores than is justifiable, and that this emphasis has a variety of negative effects on secondary education.

To standardize means "to make uniform, to cause to be without variations or irregularities." When we standardize learning, it becomes something that is "neither very good nor very bad"—the definition of mediocrity itself.[7] Colleges complain about the routine, mechanistic, superficial thinking of their applicants; but they have not really faced up to their own role in fostering what a colleague of mine calls the multiple-choice mentality. "In manipulating symbols so as to recite well, to get and give correct answers, to follow prescribed formulae of analysis," Dewey wrote, "the pupil's attitude becomes mechanical rather than thoughtful; verbal memorizing is substituted for inquiry into the meaning of things."[8] Creative art celebrates originality, uniqueness, and open-ended inquiry. It rebels against standardization, regularity, depersonalization, mediocrity, and adherence to prescribed formulas. It encourages deep and divergent kinds of thinking that defy easy quantification.

By depending on standardized test scores and grade-point averages, colleges must somehow then make meaningful distinctions between applicants. This seems to be the function of recommendation

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forms: "Most helpful are specific examples of the applicant's academic commitment and talent and personal qualities or accomplishments that make this person unique. We depend on your evaluation to help us distinguish among our many qualified applicants."[9] It is ironic that colleges claim to value examples of a student's uniqueness and originality, while virtually dismissing the firsthand evidence of creative achievement in art.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

What should be done? There has been much discussion recently about a dangerous decline in the quality of public school education. Many simplistic solutions have been proposed, including more math, more science, more homework, more hours in the school day, and more school days in the year. More of the same will only produce more of the same, unless steps are taken simultaneously to improve educational quality.

Art programs can make a critical contribution to this improvement if they do not fall victim to budget cuts, misguided reforms, myopic college admissions policies, and federal leadership in the wrong direction. The kind of creative thinking and self-motivation generated by good high-school art instruction can be used as a proven model for other disciplines—and for secondary education in general.

First, art should be elevated to a position of complete parity with other academic subjects. This parity should be reflected in a school's philosophy, as well as in its graduation requirements. Expenditures for art staff, work space, and materials should be comparable to similar expenditures for science programs. Graduate degree programs for school administrators should reflect the importance of art in the curriculum; and high-school principals should learn exactly what to expect from (and how to support) a quality art program.

Second, college admissions policies should give the same weight to art courses that they give to other academic courses, less weight to standardized test scores, and much greater weight to genuine creative achievement in *all* subjects. Judging creative ability in art presents no real problem. Several organizations, including the Advanced Placement Program of the College Board, have developed effective models for doing this; art schools do it routinely. By properly evaluating

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portfolios, colleges can get a unique, firsthand look at the quality of their applicants' work: the depth of their thinking; the power of their logic and imagination; the development of their skills; the range of their concerns; and the time, care, and energy that they invest in what they do. Colleges can help improve secondary education dramatically by demanding such solid evidence of creative accomplishment. They can also help themselves to a good look at what an applicant *can* do, instead of relying on test scores that tell more about what an applicant *cannot* do.

Third, art should be used as a model for other subjects in an effort to increase active learning time, creative problem-solving skills, critical self-evaluation, motivation, and meaningful social interaction between different kinds of students. Let me provide an example.

One day I discovered a student of mine memorizing biology notes for an upcoming test. I wondered out loud why art and science are taught so differently, since art-making and science-making are essentially the same process. Both, after all, are attempts to investigate and better understand the world by using observation, creative experimentation, and study to produce results. The class reacted violently to this assertion; everyone knew there just *had* to be a huge difference between art and science, but no one could say what it was. Finally, one student explained that science is "facts," while art is "whatever you feel."

Behind this response lurk two unfortunate misconceptions: that science is a closed system of unchanging actualities, neatly recorded and waiting to be memorized; and that art is a collection of arbitrary doodles, sometimes beautiful but always inconsequential. Since these misconceptions result from the way art and science are frequently regarded by schools, I asked my class to imagine a science course taught the way art is usually taught, and an art course taught the way science is usually taught. As a painting teacher, I would use a textbook that presented contemporary painting as an established body of knowledge. As a biology teacher, I would show my students how to use a microscope and then send them down to the pond to see what they could discover.

One student objected, saying that in order to do science, you first need to learn a great deal of background material, and that a high-school student at a pond with a microscope would not be able to discover something that is not already known by scientists. I ended

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the discussion by asking the students if, in their artwork, they had discovered something that is not already known by artists.

High-school art students are not really making "fine art"; their works will not end up in museums or influence the course of art history. But they do have the important sense that they are making their own discoveries through their work. By acting very much like artists, they come to understand the nature of creative activity. They experience the frustrations, risks, and joys of the art-making process.

By the same token, if my hypothetical biology students figured out their own way of classifying a small portion of the animal kingdom, they would learn firsthand the challenges and thrills of making science. For the same reason, math students should act more like creative mathematicians, history students should act more like historians, and English students should act more like authors.

There is no lack of educational literature about the living death caused by fragmented, compartmentalized rote learning. Accumulating knowledge is important, but it is certainly not enough. According to Sidney J. Parnes,

> Without knowledge, there obviously can be no creativity. By way of analogy, we might consider the kaleidoscope, wherein the more pieces we have in the drum the more possible patterns we can produce. Likewise, the greater our knowledge the more patterns, combinations, or ideas we can achieve. However, merely having the knowledge, the bits and pieces in the kaleidoscope, does not guarantee the formulation of new patterns. One must "revolve the drum," manipulate the knowledge by combining and rearranging the facts into new patterns. In the mind, these new patterns are ideas. . . . Without imaginative manipulation, abundant knowledge cannot help us live in a world of change. And without the ability to synthesize, evaluate, and develop our ideas, we achieve no effective creativity.[10]

The three reforms I have suggested constitute a significant step toward the achievement of "effective creativity" in our schools. This step will not be inexpensive, but it will accomplish much more than the qualitative improvement of secondary education. In addition to preparing better college students, it will help all students to prepare for a better life.

The business community has warned us of the shrinking need for unskilled labor, the dawn of the "information age," and the importance of imaginative problem-solving in a rapidly changing world of

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high technology. Only by developing creativity—our greatest natural resource—can we hope to prepare students for jobs that do not yet exist. Of greater importance, however, is the need for creative solutions to the unprecedented social, political, and moral problems that jeopardize the future itself.

Our goal is not to make every student an artist, but to exploit art as a unique vehicle for developing the individual creative potential in every student. As an open-ended, unrestricted context for thinking and caring, art expands our capacity to perceive, understand, and appreciate life. Limited only by the power of our imaginations, art confronts the unknown and attempts the impossible in order to construct new meanings. Art exalts the best and the most that human beings can be; it inspires us to surpass ourselves.

Students who work for creative satisfaction more than grades and credits will become adults who value wisdom more than wealth and status. They will not confuse "making a life" with merely "making a living." They will be leaders, not just survivors, because they will see living as an art—and art as a way of living.

Artwork is thus a metaphor for lifework in its fullest sense. In art class, students learn that a good work of art has interest, balance, and wholeness; that it seeks clarity and simplicity for the sake of truth. Good artwork is shaped with sensitive caring as well as courageous imagination. It radiates self-potency and a sense of purpose. It is a creative adventure and an ongoing act of love. Should a good life be anything less?

ENDNOTES

[1]Yale College Teacher's Recommendation for Applicant (New Haven: Yale College Office of Undergraduate Admissions, 1982).

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[3]H.W. Janson, *History of Art,* 2d ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977), p. 11.

[4]William Sparke and Clark McKowen, *Montage: Investigations in Languge* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 224.

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[6]I.A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1928), p. 145.

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[9]Cornell University Letter of Reference (Ithaca: Office of Admissions, Cornell University, 1982).

[10]Sidney J. Parnes, "Creativity Development," *Handbook on Contemporary Education* (New York: Bowker, 1976), p. 498.

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Karyn Esielonis

Libertyville

ON THE EASTERN SEABOARD, you'll happen upon a small city, Libertyville. Its history declares itself in its architecture: colonial gives way to Second Empire, and Georgian revival to *nouveau* housing project, depending on where you start, what direction you go in, and how far you walk. The city has seen its industrial heyday. Testifying to that are the factories and mills, the residences that belonged to their owners, and the so-called cottages that belonged to people who worked for them. Urban blight has made its appearance in boarded windows, vacant lots, and shells that were once homes and offices before someone burned them; but its remedy, urban renewal, has not remained in the wings. As the people who live here know the city, it is one of ethnic solidarity, neighborhoods, and charismatic politicians; as the federal government knows Libertyville, it is pages of numbers attached to an endless litany of categories.

One hundred and fifty thousand people, more or less, live in Libertyville. Census figures for 1980 break down the population into 78 percent white, 11 percent black, and 5 percent Hispanic, while 6 percent comprise the remaining divisions of official American minorities—Asians, Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, and "others." Twenty-seven percent of Libertyville's residents twenty-five years or older are high-school graduates, 15 percent have graduated from college, and 10 percent float somewhere in between. Education, at least of the kind that can be categorized in a multiple choice survey, has either been a low priority or unattainable for many of Libertyville's residents over

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twenty-five, since the remaining 45 percent or so have not completed high school.

There are 71,500 employable people in Libertyville, and the overwhelming majority—65,000—do in fact hold down jobs. Sixty-five hundred, or 9 percent, are unemployed, which is slightly below the national average. Many who are employed work in support positions or stand in front of assembly lines, and these together represent 33 percent of the labor force. Fewer than 10 percent fill administrative or managerial posts, while the remainder are employed in a variety of service and retail jobs. In terms of who pays one's salary, most—about 85 percent—work in the private sector, 10 percent in government jobs—municipal, state, or federal—and approximately 4 percent are self-employed.

The median family annual income, hovering around $15,000, is also slightly below the national average. Seventy-two percent have incomes in the $2,500 to $22,499 range, while 28 percent earn above that. Mirroring the statistics nationwide, the percentages drop as the figures in each bracket above $22,499 increase. Only 2 percent of the families of Libertyville are in the highest bracket, $75,000 or more.

John Q. Libertyville, painted by numbers, then, is probably white, has possibly completed high school, and like most Americans, is struggling to pay his monthly bills.

These statistics construct the numerical setting but tell little about what is happening in front of it. Seventy-eight percent white, for example, implies that all whites hold common beliefs, and the same is true when the figure 11 percent is held to represent the black community. The numbers suggest a composite picture of John Q. Libertyville and they sketch his features, the common denominators of the people that he represents. If you talk to people in Libertyville, however, you hear a story about these numbers. You learn about where these people live, why they live there—that is, the city's neighborhoods, their constituent elements, and their impact. You learn, too, about the diversity of the the black community. Eventually, you come away with an idea of the different shapes and sizes that Citizen Libertyville comes in, and what characteristics are factored out of the range of people he represents to create his generic portrait.

A resident of this city will indeed find himself living with people three quarters of whom are white, but some of them claim Italian

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heritage, some Irish or French Canadian, others Lithuanian, Polish, or Portuguese. Depending upon where this resident lives and works, he knows people who, either by ancestry or affectation, are WASPs. Some of his neighbors and co-workers spend their Sabbaths at Temple Beth Abraham; more, probably, spend their Sundays on the kneelers of Our Most Precious Blood. Income differentials carve this 78 percent into smaller alliances, but so, then, do ethnic heritage and religious preference, because in Libertyville, these still mean something to a number of people when they decide where they will live, who they will vote for, and how they will educate their children.

Certainly, ethnic solidarity and religion exert less power in Libertyville today than they did in previous decades. Then, they could be counted as supreme organizing factors in the city's social configuration. Then, a politician could, street by street, identify where the people who lived there, or their ancestors, had emigrated from. Today, the hegemony of ethnicity and religion is challenged, but each continues to influence the way the community divides itself. Some people will still buy houses or rent in certain neighborhoods because their families lived there for generations or because people of similar background live there. WASPs or Jews might choose to live in the eastern section; someone of Portuguese heritage, on the edges of that region; people of Italian extraction, in a western section; or individuals of Hispanic origin, in the neighborhoods of southern Libertyville—precisely for those reasons. Other ethnic groups, lacking the numbers but maintaining the sentiment, have established enclaves within neighborhoods. Alongside the neighborhood, the parish, having sustained enough vitality to do so, competes for residents' loyalties. Real estate listings sometimes locate a property, not according to its street address, but according to its parish affiliation; ethnic parishes—the Lithuanian edifice rising defiantly across the street from the Italian church, for instance—continue to attract worshippers. Finally, ethnicity has its affect on the ballot box, too. Patronage, the centerpiece of much of political life, motivates many to vote for their own kind.

The city, however, is in something of a transitional phase as older values collide with newer ones. Succeeding generations find their parents' and grandparents' reasons for living and working with, and voting for, people like themselves less and less germane to their own lives. (The impetus to do this has passed on to more recently arrived ethnic and racial groups—Hispanics, Asians, and blacks.) High

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schools with enrollments ranging from 900 to 1,700 draw from several neighborhoods and as a result, Italians mix with Asians, Irish with Portuguese, Lithuanians with blacks. Unity within the ethnic group is losing its strength; marriage announcements in the local paper evidence that change. Clare Hough who once wed only John O'Brien now unites with Fred DeCordova. The numbers attending mass at the ethnic church are not as strong as they once were, if only because a prime motivation for establishing such parishes, the need to hear a sermon in a language that could be understood, is no longer significant. Better educated, more upwardly mobile generations are less inclined to return to the old neighborhoods. Some move from the city entirely.

Settlement patterns index the decline of these traditional forces of organization. Many neighborhoods have slowly lost their ethnic stamp, not only because many children no longer move next door to their parents, but for other reasons as well. People in need of inexpensive housing move into low-rent sections. When landlords find a specialized market that can pay—college students, for example—they raise rents, and thereby force longtime residents to move. Then there are people who, wanting to live among members of a certain community, but unable to find available or affordable housing in the area, will rent or buy in an adjacent section. If enough people do this, one group can gradually swallow up another's territory, and thus, some already densely settled but still popular neighborhoods capture, amoebalike, others. This can happen because, in some cases, it is *who* lives in the houses, not so much any specific geographical feature, that separates one neighborhood from another. Gentrification affects a few areas; now, too, race is beginning to define several others.

Libertyville, no doubt, could be any small city. Factor in a few more or a few less percentage points of unemployment, give more weight to one minority group over another, add or subtract a few hundred dollars from the median family income, or substitute one ethnic group for another in the recent municipal elections—and you will describe a Libertyville.

Libertyville dates back to colonial times. Early residents have left a few traces—in the architecture of certain neighborhoods, on the street signs, in the listings of the phone book. Of the many immigrant groups who have settled here, the Irish and the Italians have had the

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most impact. The political rise and fall of these two constituencies illustrates something of the way the city operated (and to some extent continues to operate) politically, about how numbers and settlement patterns partially determined who sat on the city council and in the mayor's office. Today, the wards—organizing them and creating coalitions between them—continue to be a focal point of Libertyville's political landscape.

The Irish came to Libertyville in the nineteenth century and for a long time dominated municipal politics. Originally they established tight-knit enclaves, but their rapid spread to other parts of the city allowed them to gain leverage in other wards and to capture additional votes. Election after election they delivered their candidates to city hall. The Italians entered Libertyville between the 1890s and the First World War. Yet while the Irish were paving freeways into city hall, the Italians, even though they were numerically strong, managed only small inroads. The reason for this had at least something to do with the way they had settled. Their inclination to congregate secured their neighborhoods from outsiders but left them politically impotent, except for the few wards they managed to capture. In the past decades, however, many of the Irish migrated past the borders of the city and into the suburbs, which means they no longer vote in Libertyville. The Italians had meanwhile spread into other neighborhoods, infiltrated more wards, and gained greater leverage in municipal politics. The new living arrangements, both theirs and the Irish, coupled with political shifts at the state level, have increased their ranks in city hall.

Again, the same caveat that applies to neighborhoods applies to politics: new concerns ranging from services for newly arrived minority groups to regulations imposed on the municipal government by the federal are changing the picture. The city can no longer afford to run—as perhaps it did in the past—on the premise that it serves one constituency over another.

While the Irish and the Italians have been the "x" and "y" of Libertyville's political equation, other groups, for reasons specific to the size and needs of the particular community, make, or are beginning to make, an impact on city life. The WASP community is one of these constituencies. They are the progressives here, the reformers, or as one member of their ranks described them, the "bottle bill people." They hold few of the important city positions but still maintain

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political visibility as the heads and members of cultural organizations, advisory groups, and nonallied political committees. Not all members of this group grew up in Libertyville, and therefore they have fewer ingrained allegiances to any one section or faction. Their loyalties and views tend to be less narrowly partisan; working for the good of the city coincides with working for the good of their own community. But because their ranks are small, their views have less of an impact on what happens here. This group also has little involvement with public education, because many send their children to private schools, some of them located in the streets of their neighborhood or in adjacent towns and cities. You won't see many of them at PTA or school committee meetings, and if they do attend, they go as citizens, taxpayers, or members of other political organizations, not as parents of children who are being educated by the city.

Much of the black community lives in the southern region of the city, the section where immigrants to Libertyville have traditionally settled before moving on to other areas. Although these neighborhoods are on the upswing, and efforts at urban renewal are being made, many of the buildings remain in fairly dilapidated condition. The low-income housing project in the area has seen better days. Most of these residents are renters, and it is therefore difficult to organize and revitalize the streets. While someone from Chicago or New York might scoff at the description, these neighborhoods, to some residents of the city, are the slums of Libertyville.

The black community has gained representation on the city council and in other municipal offices, but the community's attempt to assert itself politically has not been without its troubles. At a time when a united front is in order, the community is split by factions between American-born and African blacks. Also, black leaders seeking to increase their power base have found that compromise is unavoidable and inevitable. But their constituents have greeted concessions with some hostility and an unwillingness to understand that such moves are necessary if the community wants representation outside its own wards.

In terms of how citizens relate to one another and what they designate as high-priority issues on the city agenda, ethnicity plays a larger role than race. If there has been racial tension in Libertyville, it is not overt. There have been no riots; whites and blacks walk through each other's neighborhoods without fear. In 1967 the city voluntarily

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desegregated its schools, a measure that caused only a few ripples of dissension in some of the white neighborhoods where many families had lived for generations. None of this means, however, that tension is wholly absent from the city. There is talk of police harrassment of blacks and of transgressions of civil rights stipulations in some low-income developments. The manifestations of racial tension, however, are sporadic, and their impact on the priorities that the city's government must set for itself, limited. If anything, the greatest source of tension comes from within the community itself.

The small percentage of Asians, many of whom came here in the wake of the Vietnam War, suggests that their community gives the city visual variety but little more. They are welcomed, however, as a stabilizing element in Libertyville's neighborhoods—some live on the outskirts of the eastern section and others in the southern part of the city—and in its schools. The Hispanics, most of whom live in the southern region, came to Libertyville beginning in the 1960s mainly from New York and the Caribbean region. Together with the Asians and the blacks, they emerge in the political life of Libertyville, not because they run the city, not because their numbers are exceptionally large, but because they need the city—its public housing and public schools, its low-income apartments and English-as-a-Second-Language programs.

Richard Daley once expressed his vision of Chicago government in terms of a wheel, with himself as hub and everyone else as spokes. Mayors of Libertyville could use this analogy appropriately to illustrate their own situation, for that is exactly what the city's government looks like rendered in a diagram. The mayor is at the center, the departments orbit around him. In this city, people cast only three important votes—for mayor and for two city council members to represent the ward they live in. The electorate, then, can express its vision of city government every four years at the ballot box.

The mayor appoints people to almost all offices, commissions, and boards in the city—the school committee included—subject to the approval of the twenty-six-member city council—two members from each of thirteen wards. The departments of the city—and again, the school committee is included—formulate policy and prepare their budgets under his auspices. In money matters, the mayor has the power to veto any line item. Citizens may speak on issues at the city

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council meeting, a twice-monthly affair, but need the signatures of fifty or so fellow residents on a petition to gain an audience at city council committee sessions.

Legend has it that on his deathbed, Louis XIV confessed to having loved power too much. Some mayors of Libertyville might say the same thing. This top-heavy form of government, concentrating so much power in the mayor, has its costs and benefits. Some observers of the political scene in Libertyville argue that the system makes for a more efficient mode of government. They believe that one person making the decisions decreases the bureaucracy and factionalism that can no doubt eventuate in judicious compromises, but that can also impede decision-making. The operating principle in this argument is that too many cooks spoil the broth. In addition, when power is concentrated, when it is not dispersed among several groups, it is more visible, making it easier for the citizenry to pinpoint who made the decision, and then to approve or reject that decision.

A Libertyville mayor with a Louis XIV personality can, however, abuse his position. Should he be inclined to overstep his bounds, little can stop him, because the only group that can really check him in the years between elections, the city council, occasionally cannot muster a majority vote. In Libertyville, the political community—the ward—and the natural community—the neighborhood—are, for all practical purposes, one and the same. And since neighborhoods—or wards—have their own interests, the needs of one do not always correspond with the needs of another. According to some sources, the people's economic and emotional investments are not in the city but in the neighborhoods. The same might be said for city council members, and thus a divided council has difficulty opposing the mayor.

This imperfect balance of power collides with what has been a persistent feature of Libertyville's politics—patronage. Theoretically, there is nothing wrong with appointing Uncle Pat or Cousin Dominic to positions if both are well qualified for the posts, nonpartisan in their stances on issues and—if the job involves money—in their allocation of funds, and can make decisions independently of the wishes of whoever appointed them. If they do not meet all three criteria, they probably should not sit, for example, on the housing board or the school committee, in offices where the issues—in these instances, shelter and education—are complex. Those on the school committee

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or housing board might also set priorities that differ from what the people who use the services actually need. To put the issue hypothetically, they could vote to use a sum of money to increase someone's salary instead of allocating it for books, in the case of schools, or renovations, in the case of housing. While a roof or a diploma, walls or curricula, should be apolitical, they, of course, not always are.

When the sons and daughters of Libertyville come of age and enter junior high, they have several options as to where they will go—six public schools and five independent day schools. Three public comprehensive high schools, one public entrance-examination high school, four of the independent schools, and three parochial schools open their doors to high-school freshmen. In recent years, the number of students in public secondary schools, both middle and high, has been around 8,000. The enrollments of the parochial and independent schools are not that much smaller. All told, the number of students grades seven through twelve in the independent schools and nine through twelve in the parochial schools is approximately 6,000. (The enrollments of both the independent and parochial schools, it should be noted, draw from the surrounding towns and cities as well as from Libertyville.)

The public middle schools are scattered among the neighborhoods. One is located in the eastern section of the city; another near the inner city, in an area populated by large numbers of Italian and Hispanic families. Two schools are situated in the southern section, one where many poor black families live, the other where there are many poor white families. The fifth is near the central business district and a preponderantly Italian neighborhood, and the sixth, opened very recently, on the outskirts of the city, in a white working-class community.

Enrollments for grades seven and eight in the public middle schools (five of them also instruct students in the fifth and sixth grades) range from approximately 150 to 650. Some students, if they are selected by their teachers, participate in a program for the gifted, housed in one of the middle schools. Otherwise, students attend the school nearest to where they live, unless they are bused to another school to bring its enrollment in line with stipulations of the desegregation measure.

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At one time the three comprehensive high schools each had its own reputation. The inner-city school was known to be tough, the site of the greatest discipline problems, the school that black and poorer kids attended. At the second, in the northwestern section of the city, Italian and Irish kids spent their schooldays together, and it was there that the decorated athletic hero roamed the corridors with John Q. Libertyville, Jr. The third school could have been called a "zoo" and a "near caricature" of the social and ethnic makeup of Libertyville because of its enrollment. Drawing from all parts of the eastern region of the city, the school became a kind of intersection where WASPs met Asians, blacks, and Hispanics, with students from white working-class backgrounds sitting in the desks beside them.

These reputations no longer have the currency they once did. Magnet programs—special curricula for business, government, science, and the arts, to which any student in the city can apply and which are housed in the three schools—and busing have blurred the picture. The 1967 desegregation measure stipulates that every school, elementary, middle, and high, must bring their minority enrollments within 15 percentage points, plus or minus, of the overall minority enrollment in the schools.

A nine-member school committee governs the public schools, and its responsibilities range from determining the school budget to selecting the superintendent and approving curriculum and books. The school committee was an elected body until the late sixties, when the city decided to put the composition of the board in the hands of the mayor. A citizen's report from that time discussed the rationale behind the move, arguing that the school committee had been partisan in its allocation of funds, that the electorate had shown little interest in nonpartisan school elections, and that qualified people often chose not to run because of the time, money, and effort required to campaign for the position. Insofar as the mayor now appoints the school committee and they in turn select the superintendent, there is a fairly direct line from city hall to the school administration.

The independent schools govern themselves in conjunction with a board of trustees. The three parochial schools—diocesan as opposed to private parish schools—each devises its own curriculum, selects its textbooks, and structures its budget subject to the evaluation of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools. This superintendent also inter-

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views candidates for teaching positions but leaves it to the principal of the school to hire or reject the candidate.

The composition of the public secondary school enrollment is no microcosm of the city's racial and ethnic makeup. Three quarters of the entire population are white, while that is true of only one half of the secondary school students, and the black enrollment is roughly double the percentage of blacks in the city. Other minority groups, too, have more visibility in the public schools than they do in Libertyville as a city—Hispanics comprise 9 percent of the secondary school student body, and Asians, 7. The private and parochial schools, on the other hand, enroll very few minority students.

Why many white parents choose to send their children to independent and parochial rather than public schools may have something to do with the way Libertyville's citizens see their public education system. With the exception of the public entrance-examination school, that reputation is not good, although general agreement holds that it lags several years behind what is actually happening in the classroom. In part, this disjunction between reputation and reality lies with inadequate public awareness. The public schools, for instance, send as many students (approximately 60%) to college as do two of the parochial schools; SAT scores of public school students have risen steadily during the past few years. While the average scores are several deciles below those of the independent schools, they are slightly above the average scores of the parochial school students. Moreover, even though violence is not a regular part of corridor and classroom life in the public schools, such events are the makings of legend, and scare some students into the independent and parochial schools.

Inadequate public awareness may well be a product of low public interest. School committee meetings are not standing-room-only affairs; the local paper currently has only a part-time reporter on the education beat. Citizens are more apt to get involved with the city's schools when money is the issue at hand. Sometimes this city, like all cities, must decide between increasing the tax base to cover expenditures or simply decreasing its expenditures, realizing that the latter action will entail cutting some services. The school budget, because it comprises such a large portion of the city's overall budget, is a prime target for cuts. Citizens who take an interest in the schools only when their wallets are at stake can create a problem that is best described as a question. Are they promoting cuts because, after taking the time

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to consider what program or service the money is being spent for, they disagree with the rationale for that program or service, or do they disagree only with the figure they see? Moreover, in cities where patronage is an important part of the political process, and where labor unions are very strong, as they are here, there is no guarantee that, if cuts are made, what is needed in the classroom will be the top priority.

The reputation of the schools and the public's low interest in them spawns some very real problems. First, if parents in Libertyville have the money to pay tuition, they will generally send their children to independent and parochial schools. Second, parents who consider living in Libertyville but who cannot afford tuitions might bypass the city in favor of a nearby suburb where the schools are reputedly better. In both cases, the schools and city may be losing a group of children whose contributions in the classroom might be important, and whose parents might contribute significantly to the discussion on public education and to the affairs of the city generally.

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Richard Marius

Unscientific Ruminations on Schools in Libertyville

When I was asked to join a team of observers to visit the schools in Libertyville, I realized that I had not been in a high-school classroom as part of the audience since I was in high school myself, had not sat silently at a desk and listened to a teacher conduct a class since the fragrant spring of 1951, when I spent my last day before graduation at Lenoir City High School in East Tennessee, taking exams, and hearing our teachers one by one tell us goodbye.

So I went to Libertyville not as an expert but as a reporter. I was told that for this project, observation was enough. This was to be no scientific, statistical survey; humanists all, we were to sit in classrooms to see how the humanities were being taught in various middle schools and high schools, public and private and parochial, scattered across urban Libertyville. Our impressions were only a fragment of a much larger landscape; all of us knew that. And we were always aware of the fallibility of our inferences. Our only charge was to be as honest as we could be in observing and in reporting.

So I journeyed to Libertyville with the team, and over a period of days sat at desks, usually too small for me, and watched and made notes and tried to understand what was going on. What I saw disturbed me profoundly. And just as we were concluding our observations, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued its report, *A Nation at Risk*.[1] Obviously, this is a moment in the national life when many people are alarmed at the decay in America's class-

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rooms, but whether anything can be done about this decay—evident to anyone who cares to look at what is going on—remains to be seen.

Some of the problems faced by the schools are so rooted in contemporary society that only the foolish and the cruel can demand that struggling teachers solve them. Yet a large responsibility for the misery of the current American classroom must be laid on teaching that is often inert, inept, inefficient, and insufficient. The problems show many faces, some of them far different from what I expected on that chill winter morning when I somewhat nervously took my seat at the back of my first high-school English class in Libertyville. I sat looking around tentatively at my fellow students and at bright posters taped on ugly concrete block walls. But then the teacher spoke cheerfully to the class and lifted her chalk to a blackboard that had a peculiar hole, shaped somewhat like a Volkswagen Beetle, punched through the center of it (made, I was told, by an unusually vigorous teacher who hammered the blackboard with his fist to emphasize a point), and my experience in Libertyville began with a show of normality.

I had read about racial tension and the blackboard jungle in the inner-city schools of America. I expected to see overt racism and perhaps racial violence in Libertyville. But I did not. On the contrary, I saw much friendliness between blacks and whites. It appears that in Libertyville as elsewhere, blacks tend to gather with other blacks in the hallways between classes and in the lunchroom, and that whites stick with whites and Asians with Asians. I did not witness striking intimacy across racial lines. But in every public school and in the parochial school, I saw blacks and whites talking and laughing together here and there, and I could not detect any smoldering resentments or threats of violence. (The private schools were all almost sugar white.) "I used to be afraid to come to school," a public high-school teacher told me. "But that was years ago. Things are better now. We don't have any big problem with violence. Now and then something scary comes up; you get into a row with a big kid, and you don't know what will happen. But it's not a big thing here now. Not any more."

What I did observe in the classrooms may have been as bad as violence. I saw teachers without any clear purpose for what they were doing converting the classroom into a wasteland of tedium, where the only object seemed to be to keep order until the bell rang. I

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saw students shouting at each other across the room while teachers were trying to conduct class, interrupting the teacher with irrelevant questions and sometimes insulting comments, chatting among themselves without regard for what was happening in the class, and in general, regarding school attendance as one of the mysterious customs of contemporary society, a custom that sometimes appeared to me as meaningless.

I could see no evidence that race was in any way responsible for these disruptions except that the Asians I observed never disrupted anything. Several scenes come vividly to mind. In one of the public high schools, vandal-proof windows were being installed in the building. A class I observed met in a crowded corner of the cafeteria because carpenters were working with power tools in the regular classroom, and the din, which resounded through the long corridors, was deafening and unbearable. (I wondered what monstrosity of careless planning had caused windows to be installed in a school in session. Isn't summer vacation good for *something?*)

The students sat at a couple of cafeteria tables. The teacher, a kindly man, a longtime veteran in the public school system, gathered around him a group of Asian students and a single Portuguese-speaking girl from Brazil. The Libertyville system has many Asian kids in it, children who have landed in the city as a result of the Vietnam War, dropped into Libertyville by accident, kindness, and fate, making their dogged way in a strange new land. Many of them scarcely speak English at all. I asked the teacher where the parents of most of these children might be found. He turned to a slender young boy sporting a carefully cultivated adolescent mustache, and repeating my question, raising his voice in precise loudness, asked the boy to translate it to the others. A conversation in a language none of the rest of us could understand went on. Finally the boy reported to us that none of the children could say exactly where either father or mother might be found, although a couple said they believed their parents were dead.

At the other end of the table and at an adjoining one, a small group of blacks and whites talked boisterously among themselves, paying no attention to the teacher. Early in the class he discovered himself without notebook paper, and he asked one of that group to go to a supply room to fetch some. The student he addressed, a surly white adolescent, snarled a refusal. The teacher did not argue or

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show any sign of anger at this defiant rudeness. He turned instead to one of the young Asians, and after some difficulty in making himself understood, sent that child off to fetch the paper. The child did not return for a long time, and finally the teacher dispatched another Asian to find him and to bring lost child and paper back again. Eventually they both returned, having made a bewildering odyssey through the labyrinthine corridors of the school, at last finding the paper and each other. The blacks and the whites throughout all this time kept up their idle, loud banter among themselves.

The paper, once in the teacher's hands, became a substitute for a blackboard. The Asians and the Brazilian girl then gathered around the teacher and with hungry eyes listened to him slowly and patiently explain contractions. "Don't!" he said firmly. "That is a contraction for *do not*." The blacks and the whites at the opposite end of the table seemed to talk louder. He ignored them and went on writing contractions in large letters on the paper, holding the paper up and flashing it around so that the Asians and the Brazilian could see it, once saying in evident bewilderment, "I suppose you don't have contractions in *your* language."

When the class ended, the teacher collected his things slowly, looked apologetically at me, and said, "I guess you can see I've given up on some of these kids. I can teach only the ones who want to learn something." The Brazilian girl remained talking to him as I went away; he was patiently trying to explain to her some point in basic English.

A cafeteria, of course, is not a normal place to hold a class, and the relation of the teacher to the native-born Americans, black and white, might have been different in their normal bailiwick. The general lack of mutual respect between those students and the teacher did not encourage me to think that they got along better in the classroom. But one might also observe that the teacher had something to teach to those students who did not know English well enough to understand contractions. These kids could see a clear purpose for being in that class; the others could not. And the teacher, in so far as I observed him, was not able to devise an assignment that might have united the class in learning something.

In the next class I attended at the same school—a course supposedly in European history—a hulking adolescent boy, with an Elvis Presly haircut greased back over his head, managed to disrupt the class

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continually with his loud voice. The teacher, whom I shall call Miss Smith, strove valiantly to get the class to discuss the Industrial Revolution. The only point she seemed able to make during the entire period was that early factories grew up near deposits of coal and iron because transportation costs usually limited the profits of industrial concerns located far from their natural resources. The large boy, sitting behind me in a corner, kept up a running banter of utterly irrelevant questions and mindless chatter introduced by a crashing, "Miz SMITH! Miz SMITH!" Miss Smith did her best to ignore him and to get on with her discussion, but she could not shut out that booming and disruptive voice. The boy had his most amused and responsive audience in the opposite back corner of the room where a knot of girls, blacks and whites, giggled loudly at most things he said. The principal, leading me into the room just after the class had begun, looked at the knot of loudly talking and laughing girls and went back quickly and moved the loudest of the bunch to the front of the room. As the class went on, her efforts to communicate with her friends in the back became so disruptive that the teacher moved her back there again, seemingly on the philosophy that it was much better to focus the noise than to diffuse it. Some might suggest that this sort of behavior is nothing more than to be expected among adolescents in the classroom. But I found it so nerve-wracking that I could not imagine teaching anything significant while it was going on. Could the teacher have done anything to hold the attention of the class? She was trying hard to ask questions that would stimulate some response. But the children had not read the assignment, and no one could give any sensible answers to any of the questions she posed.

The parochial school was especially disappointing to me because of the lack of discipline that I observed in the two classes I attended. I had never been inside the doors of a parochial school in my life, and I do not know exactly what I expected—perhaps the reality of some impossible dream of students making a disciplined study of old texts under the authority of stern and virtuous nuns and priests, who commanded such intense affection and respect that no one would dare misbehave in their classes. Instead I found the same high-decibel classroom noise that I found in the worst of the public schools. Students talked continually to one another; at any given moment each teacher I observed commanded the attention of only a small fraction of the class. I contributed to the disruption, I fear; in one of the

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classes, one of the girls kept twisting about in her chair to look at me until, midway through the hour, she lost her balance and fell heavily onto the floor with a crash that shook the room. After the teacher and I had rushed to her aid and helped her to her feet, and ascertained that there were no broken bones, the teacher, a novice nun in her first year of teaching, said wearily to the class, "I know it's Monday afternoon, and you're all tired."

Yet again, though the noise level in itself seemed to preclude any effective teaching, the teachers in the parochial school, though well meaning and devoted, seemed to lack any clear sense of purpose. And children, feeling the purposelessness by the intuitions that healthy children have for what bores them, turned to each other for an interest they could not otherwise find. The parochial school and the nonprep public high schools languished in poverty, and it seemed clear to me that the miseries of these classrooms arose because these schools have become the repository of children of working-class parents and of that underclass that cannot find work in our society. Here are the children of the dispossessed, already dispossessed themselves, bringing to the classroom something of the anarchy of their private lives.

I sat in on three private schools (now they are called "independent schools"), and there I saw small groups of extremely lively students sitting with equally lively teachers, talking well about literature and writing, subjects that they all knew would help them get into the right college later on. In one of the classrooms in the college-prep public high school, I found the same organized and animated discussion led by a brilliant teacher. But elsewhere I found an almost complete indifference to formal academic learning, an indifference seemingly inevitably created by the sense among the students that none of this was going to do them any good later on, that none of it was interesting now, and that they were in school because they had no place else to go. Many of the classrooms I saw were holding tanks for our society's toxic waste, the aimless and hopeless children created by an indifferent middle-class society that takes poverty as the natural lot of the masses. It is little wonder that many of these children disturb classes and hinder the learning process.

From at least the time of Karl Marx it has been observed that both aristocracy and the middle class possess a cultural unity that defines life and generates purpose to the members of those classes. Nowa-

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days it may be that the purpose of the middle-class schoolchild and his teachers is merely to prepare for college and that a college education has become a simple utilitarian objective. At least it is a purpose, and that shared purpose generates unity, giving teachers some idea of what they ought to be doing in the classroom and making students accept the direction of their teachers, because those students know that that direction will lead them to a job and a bank account and a house in the suburbs with a two-car garage.

But the lower classes, the dispossessed, both black and white, have no conscious "natural" unity. Their unity must be thrust upon them by theoreticians from above who relentlessly preach that the masses *ought* to unite, and at times when wars slaughter their children or unemployment reduces the parents to desperation, some momentary enthusiasm for unity may roll through the underclass and sweep it toward revolution. But the underclass seems to know no middle ground between revolution and apathy, and in Libertyville, it seemed to me that the poor children I observed recognized no general community that could give them a long-range purpose. It is perhaps an economic and social version of Tolstoy's dictum that happy families are all alike but that every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. An anarchy pervades the lives of the miserably poor, no matter what color they are, and that anarchy penetrates the public schoolroom and devastates the classroom where writing and the other humanities should be taught. Writing—like all the other humanities—requires a continuity of concentration and response, and in most of the public and parochial classrooms that I visited in Libertyville, I found it hard to concentrate on anything because of the noise in the classroom. And teachers, miserably paid, seemingly not well educated in the humanities they were supposed to be teaching, unsure of their own purposes, unable to assure these children that education was the way out of poverty, seemed to be able to devise no techniques that might have made them successful.

In the nonprep public high schools in Libertyville, I sat in class after class with enrollments in the thirties but with only twelve or fourteen children present. I asked one teacher if there might have been some mistake in the enrollment figures I was given for her class. Fourteen children were present. Were thirty-two on her books? Yes, she said, the enrollment was officially thirty-two. But, she said, students attended irregularly, and so she could never count on having

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the same group from session to session. "Sometimes you get a student who comes once a month," she said. "Then sometimes you don't see a student for several months at a time, and you think he's disappeared. But then he will turn up again."

I asked, rather naively, I think now, why parents do not do more to keep their children in school. I was told that parents have little time to pay attention to such things, and that a great many of these children come from single-parent homes, where the parent in charge—usually a mother—has to work so hard she cannot devote any energy to making her children go to school. Others said that parents have no control over their children in high school and that even if the parents wanted their children to go to school, they have no power to make them go. The children, often resenting the inability of their parents to struggle out of poverty, find nothing in their parents' lives worthy of respect or obedience. I was told also that many of these children live alone, making their solitary way through a solitary life, going to school only when they feel like going or when they could go. "At parents day we're lucky if two parents out of a group of thirty show up," one teacher told me. "Many times we have parents day and not a single parent comes." One teacher told me that attendance in his classes dropped sharply on rainy days because his students lacked any proper rain gear, and he said that on the coldest days of winter, many were absent because their only jackets were flimsy, unlined nylon windbreakers.

The teachers themselves lived scattered around the region, some of them in an adjoining state. Some of them commuted twenty or thirty miles to school. Not only do they not know the parents of their students, they often scarcely know each other. I asked several times if teachers saw each other socially, if they got together to go to the movies or to have dinner with one another or to drink beer and play cards. A few answered affirmatively. But most greeted my question with a blank look of incomprehension, as if I had asked something they had never thought of before. One teacher said that she had on occasion heard of teachers getting together after hours, but that it was not usual. I had the feeling that she vaguely recognized the import of my question and that she wanted to reply in a positive way that would make me think better of the community of teachers to which she belonged. But I did not find much conviction in her answer. I attended one class where only four or five children were pres-

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ent. The teacher was furious. Various special events had been scheduled for the day, and these special events had taken his students out of his class. But no administrator had told him about these events beforehand. "Nobody tells me anything," he said. It seemed to be yet another sign of how little most teachers talked to one another.

Often it seemed to me that the public schools suffer because students try to make them a substitute for the family life they are missing at home. This judgment is even more subjective than others I present in this paper, and if it is true, the effort to make the school a family is probably unconscious. But again and again in Libertyville, I saw children using the classroom to get the kind of attention they probably do not get at home. I suspect that at home they get either no attention at all or that the attention they do get is hostile or even violent. But in the classroom they can get favorable attention from their peers, and from their teachers win a strained, teeth-clinching effort at favorable attention, far beyond what they might expect from harassed, unemployed, sometimes violent parents. Lacking love and feeling the lack acutely, they settle for the nearest thing to love they can find, and that turns out to be the notoriety they get by disturbing the class. The disrupters obviously enjoy a status in the classroom higher than that of other students. They are somebodies; the other students seem even to themselves to be nobodies.

Being a somebody is a consummation devoutly to be wished. In one class I observed, an unmarried adolescent girl was quite seriously pregnant. Her condition provoked much banter among her peers. "What are you going to do if Julie has her baby right here?" a student asked. The teacher said, "Well, I just had a baby, and if Julie's baby comes during the class, I can handle it." Later I asked the teacher if any rule in the Libertyville school system prohibits pregnant girls from coming to class after a given month; the teacher replied that if there is such a rule, no one pays any attention to it. I asked if the father of the coming child was likely to marry the girl? No. Why did she not have an abortion? Pregnant girls in that school rarely thought of abortion. Would she keep the child or put it out for adoption? She would probably keep the child. Is there any disapproval expressed toward single girls who got pregnant? Oh no. On the contrary, pregnant girls get a measure of respect and a great deal of attention from their peers and teachers. The teacher thought that many of the girls

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take it as a matter of course that they should be pregnant, that pregnancy is their role in life.

I recalled the vivid interest of my own settled, rural community and family clan in the pregnancy of a wife and the advent of a child, and it seemed to me that the school now took the place of both clan and community. The members of the class provided an extended family for the expectant girl—but with the critically important difference that the fellow students could offer only ritual support for the birth and that the community represented by the class is so fragile and so temporary that it could not continue any interest in the child once born. The rituals of childbirth and group attention to that event continued as a kind of impossible yearning for a vanished substance. Yet for members of an economic class that has no future, no aspirations, no hope, the moment is everything, and the attention Julie got for being pregnant was her moment in the sun.

On another morning I sat at the back of a freshman English class in one of the wealthy private schools while a superb teacher conducted a session that included both writing essays and close reading of poetry. The discussion dwelled for a moment on the difference between immediate and delayed gratification. Should people do only what they enjoy doing at the moment, or should they do some things they do not enjoy as a means to some other enjoyment later on?

The students, in a jocular mood, suggested that if they followed the principle of immediate gratification, they would all walk out of the class. The teacher, wearing a boyish grin and an Izod alligator sweater, perched cheerfully on his desk and probed them a bit. "Well, if you are unhappy, why *don't* you go home?" "Because our parents would kill us," one boy said immediately. The class laughed hard. But I thought that this might have been the most significant statement about education that I heard in Libertyville. If parents care, one kind of education takes place; if parents do not care, education becomes defined only by what needs to be done to get through the day. The private schools charge high tuitions, but they require and get volunteer work from parents. The private schools are thoroughly middle class, almost entirely white, somewhat embattled in that, despite parental support, they must struggle for their financial existence. But they are resolutely dedicated to liberal education and to the middle-class definition of wordly success. At least since the Renaissance, a liberal education has meant that when the young are

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taught to act like ladies and gentlemen, they will be treated like ladies and gentlemen, even if they lack noble birth and vast estates. And when they are treated like ladies and gentlemen, they receive a social liberty to exercise their talents to make money and advance themselves in the world. Some of them may discover in this process a love of learning for its own sake, but that love has probably always been more limited in the general middle-class population than humanists would like to believe. I did not note any special manifestation of its presence in the private schools.

The private schools pay much lower salaries to teachers than do the public schools, and the private schools must struggle to keep going. But the private schools float in the community of the families that support them. It is a middle-class community that confers its values on its institutions and expects those institutions, especially its schools, to mirror those values.

The morale of the private school teachers seemed high, and their professional community seemed close. In all three of the private schools that I visited, I was struck by the pleasant eating rooms used by teachers and students alike. The private school teachers seem to enjoy each other, and in general seem more relaxed—or at least, they are much less likely to smoke cigarettes than their counterparts in the public schools. They seem also to relish their distinction from the public schools, which they have given up as a lost cause. They are convinced that no true learning can go on in the public schools, and are sure that the dignity of teachers in the public schools is continually threatened both by rowdy students and by the teachers' union in the Libertyville public system. The union drew particular fire from the private school teachers; they are sure that belonging to a teachers' union lowers the status of the teaching profession.

The private school teachers believe they receive respect and support from the parents of the students they teach. The sense of belonging to a community and perhaps a sense of belonging to the right social class, the class of the parents and the children, a class where unions are for money-grubbing incompetents working on assembly lines in Detroit, seem to be compensation enough for the financial sacrifice of teaching in the private schools. Although several of them complained dolefully to me about their low salaries, none of them responded affirmatively to the question I posed to all of them: "Would you consider teaching in the public schools in the future?"

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At times I wondered if the class feeling of some of the private school teachers might be somewhat akin to the snobbery of butlers to the gentry in nineteenth century England.

However that may be, the sense of community and common purpose is the greatest asset the private schools possess, and its absence around the public schools is the most critical problem these schools must confront. It is hard not to see these huge public schools as dinosaurs struggling for survival in a world where the sustaining marshland is drying up in a withering sun.

The effect of this change in the climate for the public schools has been pronounced and discouraging on the teachers who remain there. Human beings usually rationalize their predicaments as optimistically as they can. The public school teachers in Libertyville have done this by making themselves believe that their main function is not to give children a traditional education but to socialize them, and so these teachers have thereby abandoned the effort to think critically about what they are doing or to think imaginatively about what they might do.

I found these rationalizations not only in the public high schools but also in the public middle schools. Many teachers believe themselves in business to preside over their students, to help students of different backgrounds learn to get along with one another, to familiarize them with the drills of society, and to prepare them to live with one another when they leave school. The teachers in the vocational public high schools delighted in telling me how much they love their students, how much they prefer these kids to those in the public prep school who are going to college. But then I often asked these teachers if they would enter the teaching profession if they had life to start all over again, and nearly always the response was either equivocal or sharply negative. Some of them feel sad and trapped in their jobs, believing that they cannot do anything else and be as well paid as they are for teaching. One teacher, deeply annoyed with his colleagues, said that a recent poll had shown that 80 percent of the teachers in public schools wish they had chosen another profession. "But a teacher making twenty-five thousand dollars a year (near the top of the public school scale) can't possibly find another job making that kind of money," he said. "And these people are too lazy to learn how to do anything else."

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The question teachers tried to answer seemed to be this: How can I get through the day with the least possible pain to myself? Very few teachers in the public schools appeared to be asking this question: What is the value of what I am doing to these children?

The consequence of asking the wrong questions is that teachers bring all kinds of tedious busy work to the classroom and expect education to go on if the kids obey the orders. A hardy perennial in the parochial school I observed, in one of the private schools, and in all but one of the public school classrooms was the vocabulary list. Teachers wrote the words on the blackboard, and the students copied them down. That laborious procedure, of course, takes time, and if a teacher writes slowly enough, half the period can go by—and making the period go by seems to be what much teaching is all about. The Ditto machine cranks away in both parochial and public schools, but no one could explain to me why teachers did not give copies of the vocabulary list to all the students and save the time for discussion of the list, although one teacher said gloomily that all the teachers run out of supplies in the public schools before the year ends. So teachers write lists on the blackboard, and students copy the lists on paper, and despite all the evidence to the contrary in the classrooms where this tedious procedure goes on, some educational value is supposed to be served.

In one public high-school class, the teacher wrote her words on the blackboard, and the students fell into a relative calm as they copied the words down. The room did not fall into silence; students continued to call back and forth to each other, and a buzz of conversation went on while they worked, and from time to time one of them would call something out to the teacher. One boy was particularly adept in mispronouncing one of the words so that it seemed to be an obscenity. The teacher, whose general attitude toward the class was one of resigned cheer, said, "Charles, I hope you feel relieved after that." The class laughed; they like the teacher, and it seemed to be a virtue among all the teachers in this school that they sounded quick and streetwise when they talked to their students and that they seldom seemed flustered by the general turmoil of their classes.

When this teacher had finished her list and as the students were still writing the words down, she came back to where I was sitting and whispered to me the national origins of the various members of the class. This one was from Cambodia, that one was from El Salva-

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dor, this one was from Puerto Rico, and so on. Often, she said, the children talked about where they had come from and what they had experienced. "When we get to talk about real things and not vocabulary, it's wonderful," she said. I understood her, of course, but I grieved that she did not think of words as "real things."

I wondered why she did not have students write essays about their origins and their adventures in life and read those essays to the class. Maybe then the teacher might have suggested new words that might help students say what they really wanted to say. But throughout the public and parochial school classes that I observed, the most critical element in the teaching of writing was consistently and appallingly ignored. That element is the discovery by young writers that they have something to say and that writing offers them an opportunity to think about their own thoughts and to communicate with other human beings. The most important single belief binding Renaissance thinkers together was their conviction that a good style developed character or personality, as we might call it today. It is still a conviction worth passing on to the young because it is true. But nobody ever developed a good style by copying disembodied vocabulary lists from a blackboard.

Again and again, teachers told me that they could not possibly correct all the papers if students wrote something every day. These comments reflected a sad old view of the writing teacher's task, that it is to correct papers. The true task of the writing teacher is to teach children that they have something to say, and that task can be performed only by having students write and write and write, not for the teacher but for each other. Students in elementary school and in high school should be developing hand-eye coordination by putting words on paper. If they read their work aloud in the class, or if they share it with one another and talk about what they have written, they will begin to see that although writing is work, it is also a delight. And it is not necessary that the teacher mark up every paper; indeed, the marks teachers put on papers probably do as much to destroy the students' desire to write as any other force in high-school education. Once students learn that they really do have something to say, that they can tell stories, that they can write about their own lives and about the things they see and read, and that they can interest others, the battle to make them writers is half won. Once they discover that they have a voice, they will be motivated to correct their handwrit-

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ing, their grammar, and their spelling, and if they learn that these conventions help them communicate their minds to others, they will be more interested in what teachers say about them. But in the Libertyville public and parochial schools, and sometimes in the private schools, writing is an arcane list of rules, and the teaching of grammar goes on in such isolation from everyday experience that teachers might as well be drilling their students on Etruscan inscriptions or Linear A from Crete. In the Libertyville schools, writing seems to be taught by people who never write themselves, who have no idea of what is involved in real writing, and who believe that students will be good writers if they copy vocabulary lists, circle nouns or verbs on an almost illegible Ditto handout, and memorize the other parts of speech. I once asked a seminar of about fifteen English graduate students at Harvard to name the eight parts of speech. Only one was able to do so, but those students were fairly good writers. The point is that the schools should be inculcating writing as a habit, but in Libertyville it is taught as an atomistic set of rules and definitions, all so removed from the experience that writing should capture as to make this "instruction" in writing not only worthless but pernicious.

In most of the public and parochial writing classes that I attended, I found both teachers and students operating with little sense of what writing is, little sense of books and of the written word, little familiarity with some of the simplest things that writers do. They were like surgeons trying to teach their craft without any knowledge of human anatomy. In such bewildering uncertainty, it is no wonder that the classroom becomes alien territory, a barren landscape where teachers and students alike wander aimlessly and uselessly. I sat in many classes in Libertyville asking myself this question: "Why *should* these kids come to school?" School is boring; it is probably much more interesting to them to sit at home and watch television. From time to time I wondered if television might even do their education more good.

Since teachers do not write and have no real sense of what writers do, they are deprived themselves, and they deprive their students of any worthwhile instruction in the discipline. Unable to grasp any other justification for their jobs and their teaching, they are driven to tell themselves that they love the social benefits they confer on their students, making the melting pot work, teaching people of different backgrounds to work together and live together in peace. An outsider in the classroom as a visitor may observe that students are mani-

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festly not working together and that such peace as prevails in the classroom comes from apathy and indifference rather than from some harmonious common purpose. Still teachers make these declarations of the social good they do with driving force, as if the dubious quality of the assertion requires them to make it with vigorous energy.

I was reminded just a bit of the Christian attitude toward the doctrine of the Trinity in the Middle Ages. Because the doctrine was logically absurd, and therefore extraordinary and somehow praiseworthy, it became the touchstone of orthodoxy, to be shouted whenever Christians encountered anyone who might doubt their creed. And now in the inner-city public schools designed for children with no plans to go to college, indeed with no plans to do anything or to be anything, the touchstone of orthodoxy among teachers is to claim loudly that they would rather work with "this kind of student" than with any other. To remain cheerful under fire has become the great virtue of the teaching profession, and though it is not a virtue to be despised, neither is it enough by itself to bring mind to the matter of education. So classes remain boring, and students who disrupt seem to enjoy a high status among their peers (at least their native-born peers) because these students bring something momentarily interesting into a wasteland of almost unbearable tedium. The report *A Nation at Risk* suggests that schools adopt a longer day and a longer academic year; after suffering through so many dull, dreary classes in Libertyville, I wonder what is to be gained by subjecting our children to more of the same.

Yet some teachers in Libertyville are doing well. Why do they succeed while their peers fail so abysmally? Personality, general intelligence, and education all play parts in success and failure. But it seemed to me that the successful teachers managed to take advantage of the natural desire of adolescents to perform for their peers and that the unsuccessful teachers could not make this yearning to perform work for them. In the successful classes, students performed academically; in the unsuccessful classes, the yearning to perform dissipated itself into a disruption that, though not violent, hindered and often prohibited learning for others in the class.

I saw only one successful class in the three public high schools that I observed. This class was taught by a bright, energetic woman in the school that tried to prepare students for college. Twenty-seven stu-

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dents sat in a broad semicircle while the teacher stood before them, much like the director of an orchestra, and got each student to talk about a play he or she was reading, and to tell the class a thesis for a proposed paper and to relate some of the evidence that the student would present to justify that thesis.

The teacher seemed to know all the plays by heart, and she obviously loved them. She had also managed to get these kids to understand some of the elements of writing about drama. After each student read his notes for the prospective paper, the other members of the class were free to comment, and comment they did! The exchange was rapid and intelligent, and nearly every member of the class eagerly sought the chance to perform for the rest. Their short performances made them all work hard to do well. The class was far too large for the ruminative discussion that might have gone on in a smallish seminar about drama. But thanks to the teacher's intelligence and enthusiasm for the subject, the class was not too large to let everyone perform.

In two classes on writing that I observed in one of the private schools, I listened to students read things they had written. In both classes the teachers were warm and sympathetic, eager to praise the good in papers, but also ready to make some thoughtful, tactful suggestions about revision. In keeping with the spirit of these classes, students applauded vigorously when one of their number had finished a reading. In yet another class in another private school, I heard a young woman teacher lead her students through a brilliant discussion on literary irony that would have done credit to many a college class, and the miracle was that she got her students to do most of the talking.

One of the most impressive classes I visited was taught by a young woman in her first year of teaching. Her charges were seventh-grade girls in a private middle school. She managed to get them to do a close reading of a couple of texts that they read aloud and then commented on. Here were children whose energy level was running at about 4,000 volts, but the teacher, with her own quick intelligence, kept that energy directed to the task at hand, asking interesting questions, choosing fairly among the frantically waving hands of her kids. I had the wonderful feeling that everybody in the room was having a good time and that the good time came out of the lesson for the hour. The children (whom the teacher addressed as "Ladies") delighted in

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showing each other what they knew and how well they could think. Musicians and ballet dancers and singers love to perform; why can't all teachers understand that students love to perform, too?

In the public school intended to prepare students for college, one English teacher led his students through a textbook exercise amending sentences that had been written with misplaced participial modifiers. In beginning his discussion, he gave the students some blatantly wrong information by telling them not to begin their sentences with the subject. Professional writers begin a lot of sentences with participles, he said. Students should do the same. They should use as many varieties of sentence opening as they could. This notion of seeking variety in writing by changing the normal sentence order is fairly common among writing teachers. But if he had taken the trouble to look at almost anything he reads, he would have discovered that about 75 percent of all published English sentences begin with the subject. Most of the others begin with some form of adverb or adverbial phrase or clause. He told his students to begin sentences with participles. Again, had he taken the trouble to think about what he reads, he would have noted that in many excellent writers, the proportion of participial openings is about one in every two hundred sentences. All this is to say simply that the customary form of the English sentence is to name a subject and then to make a statement about it; it is the way we speak; it is the way writers write; and it is the way students should be taught to write.

The teacher was partly led astray by the textbook he was using and by that book's claim for the place of participial openings in English sentences. In looking through the textbook, I could tell at once that it had been written not by a real writer but by a grammarian. Its approach to writing was to make students do it *right*. Neither the author nor his editors seemed to understand the constructive value of error in both the writing of professionals and the writing of students. Professionals write first to see what they have to say; then they correct their mistakes. This textbook, and this teacher, seemed to teach that before one could write, one had to learn all the mistakes that one must avoid. Then, armed with this purity of mind, the young writer could write well. The irony of all this was that not only was the method wrong, but at least one of the examples in the text was wrong, and the teacher was unwilling or perhaps unable to correct the textbook when it was wrong or misleading.

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But the most disturbing thing to me was that this teacher missed a good opportunity to make his class perform. In doing the textbook exercise, he took a position in front of the class, the book open in his hand, and said, "All right, how would you correct these sentences?" He and about five participants in the class proceeded to revise the sentences aloud while everyone else tuned out and sat looking bored or bewildered.

Why did the teacher not give his students a few minutes to revise some of the sentences on a sheet of paper? If he had had any sense of how we use English today, he might have suggested that they change the participial phrases into clauses, free modifiers, or absolutes. But even if he had had them merely place the participials correctly, he would have made them use their hands and their minds together, and in having them read their versions aloud, he would have had performance. The variety of correct responses that would certainly have come from these bright kids would have helped show students that writers always have choice and that in making a revision, any number of possibilities may be correct.

In yet another class in the public prep school, the teacher believed that her most important function was to write information on the blackboard. She presented a lecture on the paragraph that included some good points, though, like most writing textbooks, she delivered the erroneous information that paragraphs always have topic sentences that express the main idea. Her own reading of any descriptive or narrative prose should have shown her that a great many paragraphs have nothing resembling the standard "topic sentence." But I have discovered that few writing teachers anywhere can free themselves from the mistaken orthodoxies of textbooks on writing. A textbook publisher told me not long ago that writing textbooks had to define paragraphs as units built around a "topic sentence" because high-school and college English teachers demand that definition. It makes the paragraph seem much more manageable. Since my observations in Libertyville showed me that teachers do not use the textbooks to make students do any serious writing, what the textbooks say about paragraphs becomes only a harmless irrelevancy, a kind of astrology of the English class, doing neither good nor harm, but providing a pleasant diversion. Alas, if students tried to write with a topic sentence in every paragraph, their prose would become as wooden as their desks.

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The fundamental and laudable aim of this teacher was to show her class that paragraphs possess unity. She spoke vaguely of her wish to have students write some paragraphs on their own, but the hour passed, and she never got around to having them write anything. Here again I had the feeling, which I had so often in Libertyville, that teachers assumed that anything students wrote had to be *corrected,* and that if students merely wrote for one another and read their work to the class and took part in discussion about it and perhaps did not hand it in to the teacher at all, the good order of the educational universe would collapse into uncharted novelty. I am by no means suggesting that grades never be placed on student papers; but it is not necessary to grade every paper, nor perhaps most. Yet teachers in Libertyville seemed to believe that grades alone offered the ultimate proof of the worth of the classroom and of their own as hardworking servants of the public good. This teacher was witty and good-natured. Yet she seemed separated from her students by a psychic wall, and as the class went on, she devoted her attention increasingly to what she was writing on the blackboard and less and less to the live human beings seated in the classroom. When she had filled the blackboard for the first time, she turned cheerfully to the class and said, "Now, do you have all this written down in your notebooks?" Only one person in the class was taking notes; everyone else was talking or looking out the window or else looking completely bored and uninterested in everything she was saying. But with a broad, confident smile, she turned back to the blackboard, erased what she had written, and resumed her lecture and her ritual chalking, keeping her back to her students most of the time. I wanted to shout, "Hey! Can't you see what is happening? Don't you know that only one student in this room is paying any attention to you?" But I did not; I sat feeling the unhappiness of lost opportunity.

In one of the two parochial school classes I visited, a young man attempted to teach Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken." He could hardly be heard over the din of conversation from a classroom of adolescent girls. From time to time he raised his voice and said threateningly, "Girls, you've got to get this! You're going to be quizzed on this!" But they paid little attention to him, and the buzz of conversation never abated.

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He had at least made an effort to get some response from his students. He had divided the class into groups to discuss the poem, and he asked a girl from one group to read the poem aloud. As her voice sounded in the room, the other students became quieter—not silent, but quieter. The teacher could not see the effect on members of the class when he used one of their peers, and the class quickly became a series of questions addressed by him to the group he had chosen for that day's discussion. The questions were not open; he always had an answer in mind, and the students were required to guess what he was thinking. They never engaged in any exchange among themselves about the poem. All their comments went to the teacher, and he was always the authority telling them whether they were right or wrong, whether they had guessed correctly or been stupid.

He had asked the group chosen for discussion to paraphrase the lines of the poem. He thought, I suppose, that making them paraphrase would show them that the poem meant something—and he thereby failed entirely to teach them that poetry has a life of its own and that people can love it for itself. He asked some of them to read their paraphrases. But somehow the readers all seemed to be in the front left corner of the room, and they read so tentatively and so softly, so fearful of being wrong, that no one in the back could hear them. I could not hear more than a word or two in each sentence. The noise level rose. The teacher paid little attention to the paraphrases that his students read to him. Instead, he preached a little sermon about each line, explaining that Frost had had to make several choices at forks in his own life, reciting some of these choices so that he managed to give a nearly incomprehensible biography of Frost, falling into the ancient error of supposing that the best way to interpret a poem is to know something of the author's life. The consequence was that at the end, no one in the room had a clear idea of the poem or the biography. He told the girls that they would have choices to make in their lives, and he told them to think of Robert Frost when they came to forks in the road.

I wondered as he went along how many times this teacher threatened the class with a quiz? Ten? Fifteen? Twenty? I made no count, but the continual threat got on my nerves, especially since I supposed that it came from his own desperation, his awareness that no one took him seriously. His tone implied that the students were his adversaries and that they had better pay attention to him or he would

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punish them with an examination that they might fail. But they knew they would not fail or that if they did fail, it did not matter, and their indifference hung in the room like some smog of the intellect.

He often looked up at the clock as he went along. I supposed he yearned for the hour to end and grant him release. When the bell rang at last, he gave me a fervent look and said, "I hope you understand how hard this is." I wanted to tell him that he had made it hard for all of us. But I mumbled some platitude and went on my way.

Teachers in the two public middle schools I visited did a much better job at teaching writing than did those in the public high schools. In both the middle schools, students wrote in class, and I gathered that writing was a habitual exercise here. Teachers with pleasant personalities moved briskly among these students as they wrote, helping them, getting them interested in the process, praising them at times for good efforts. I did not see much evidence that the public middle-school teachers had devised ways as effective as those in the private schools for making students *perform* academically for one another. But at least the kids in the middle schools were writing a lot and getting sympathetic and helpful attention for their efforts.

What is to be done? Can anything be done, or are the schools in our country so far gone that we must regard them with the same resignation that we feel toward the New York subway system or the Los Angeles freeways? Are they to continue merely because they exist, and should we expect the people who must use them to shut their eyes and grit their teeth, knowing the experience will end sometime and letting that knowledge become a sustaining hope? Social institutions have a powerful inertia, and schools may continue just as they are simply because they are there.

Much of the problem is financial. I was astonished at the poverty I saw in the public schools, and the parochial schools are nearly destitute. In many of the public high schools, the students are not allowed to take books home with them. If the books go home, they don't come back, and books are expensive. So there can be no real homework assignments. It is a situation reminiscent of the mythological librarian who locked all his books away and refused to let them circulate because he hated to let people put their dirty hands on his sacred pages. The books I saw in the parochial schools were ragged

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and out-of-date. In all the schools, faculty salaries are low, but in the parochial schools they are abysmal.

Status, which seems to hang so much on salary, is also low, and good people can hardly be tempted to enter a profession that offers so little in return. Many of the teachers I saw were excellent and bright, and most had good intentions. Some, especially in the middle schools, were unusually kind. But I had a disturbing impression that most of these people do not read books for the pleasure that they find in them and that few of them have active and inquiring minds. Even in the seventh-grade class that I found so captivating because of the intelligence and wit of the teacher in a discussion of *Treasure Island,* I realized that she had not read the novel. The children discussed a snippet of text excerpted in a workbook. It was the account of blind Pew's first coming to the Admiral Benbow in search of Captain Billy Bones. Some of the children had seen the story on television, and they were sure that blind Pew was Long John Silver in disguise, and much fruitless discussion went on about how he could conceal his crutch and the absence of a leg. The teacher gave an opinion of her own, and although the vigorous and imaginative discussion of this meaningless puzzle was not without some benefit, it would have been no puzzle at all had the teacher been able to set the scene with a little knowledge of the work.

Teachers, especially the lay teachers in the parochial schools, must often hold two jobs, and the second job usually wears out the body without engaging the mind. I heard of teachers who sold shoes in the evenings and on weekends, who worked as cashiers, who pumped gas in filling stations, and who peddled pots from door to door. These are not occupations that sharpen the mind for the classroom or that increase discernment for the marking of papers.

It is an old rule in academe that the more time one can spend in reflective and leisurely silence, the more vital is the learning that goes on when teacher and students engage each other. By paying teachers no more—and frequently much, much less—than we pay truck drivers and welders, we have given teachers the minds of truck drivers and welders, and we have thereby robbed most of our children of any chance to be inspired by minds that the best and the brightest among them might yearn to emulate.

Any reforms in education must begin with the teachers. They must be paid more. They must be made to believe that they belong to a

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real community and that people in authority care what they are doing. Here, school principals play a critical role; they should have the wherewithal to arrange social functions for teachers, and should provide the means for teachers to visit the classes of one another. Nothing is quite so contagious as the example of someone doing well what one aspires to do oneself. Teachers should be required, and of course paid well, to attend regular institutes that keep them up-to-date in their disciplines. In an age when we advocate competency examinations for students, perhaps we should consider giving competency examinations to teachers. I would especially like to require writing teachers to write themselves and to submit their efforts to competent judges. Other professions require review for members seeking advancement; part of the review for teachers might be to see if they know what they are supposed to be teaching.

Here, universities can be important. As I sat in writing classes and saw how ineptly writing was being taught, I thought of the good my own staff of writer/teachers could do if we had only a few days with these people. The members of our team agreed that although writing is being taught significantly better in the private schools than in the others, the teaching of history and foreign languages is largely inept in all the schools, that teachers are working with outmoded and inefficient methods, and that the teachers themselves are often woefully ignorant of the fields they are supposed to be cultivating for the young. A college teacher of foreign languages should have a lot to say about her discipline to high-school teachers; the same is true for the good teacher of college history. At the very least, the skilled college history teacher might begin to undermine the debilitating and enervating assumption of the high-school teachers that history is a list of facts to be memorized and that students of the discipline have no choice about how they will put those facts together to reconstruct the past. Much of the teaching we saw was barren, but most of the teaching of history we saw in all the schools was so bad that the lunar landscape would seem like the flowering garden of God in comparison. Surely an institute in history led by a first-rate historian from a university might help high-school teachers in everything from making assignments to setting the framework for classroom discussion.

Several experiments, such as the National Endowment for the Humanities' Institutes for Teachers, have been notably successful. Oth-

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ers, created by universities in an effort to help schools in their regions, have had mixed results, and some have been noble and expensive failures. But the difficulties of the enterprise are no reason to falter in the effort to carry it out. More university teachers should do what our team did—sit in high-school classes and observe. And from those observations may come some relations that will be helpful.

All this would be expensive, requiring a sustained national effort as great as any this country has ever made. Expensive, too, would be the reconsideration of academic architecture and the eventual rebuilding of American schools to give some other physical shape and symbol to education. The public schools I saw reminded me very much of the prison, laid out in its bricks and bars, along the highway near Concord, Massachusetts. High brick walls dwarf the young children who enter these schools, the windows look too heavy and tall for a child to raise, and the general appearance is one of dilapidation and decay and alienation from the surrounding neighborhoods.

One of the middle schools I visited was new and presented a more pleasing impression. But even here I sat in a room with no windows at all, and in another with only one tiny window that from a corner admitted a thin dirty light utterly insufficient to brighten the room. One of the teachers in that school told me that some of the interior rooms had had to be abandoned because the heating system was venting *carbon monoxide* into the air. He said that even in rooms where carbon monoxide was no problem, the heating was so erratic that on one day the temperature might be ninety or a hundred degrees and on another too cold for anyone to sit comfortably or to think.

I was particularly distressed by the long, dreary corridors lined by doorways into dreary classrooms. Broken steel lockers lined the walls, their doors sometimes wrenched and twisted, sometimes altogether ripped out, leaving metallic mouths gaping and foul with rust. It was easy to look at these corridors and to believe that the ordinary standards of human decency and order did not apply here. Nothing in the architecture could give anyone the feeling of belonging or much sense of pride, or that anything done in such a building could uplift the heart and let the mind soar.

The private schools were smaller, and they had been constructed to eliminate the large impersonal room and the long corridor. The private high schools both looked a little like private homes where

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kids happened to go to school, although one of them had several buildings and occupied a large shaded campus. In one of the classrooms I attended in a private middle school, kids sat around on pillows spread on the floor and saw a short movie about the English stage in Shakespeare's time, and afterwards discussed it. The eating rooms of these schools were not small, but they were pleasant, and nowhere near as large and noisy and impersonal as the cafeterias of the public schools.

What would happen if we could decentralize the school system in our big cities and think small, making our schools look like houses and selling off for warehouses or jails these huge, bleak buildings that now dominate our educational landscape? The idea of decentralizing education has been knocked about by a few radical thinkers in recent years. Kirkpatrick Sale in his recent book *Human Scale*[2] contends that a major reason for the decline of achievement in American education has been the emphasis on the large high school, an emphasis that owes much to the 1959 report by James B. Conant on secondary education in the United States.[3] Conant observed that effective science education required a critical mass of students and teachers and that the small high school was unable and unlikely to produce graduates who could go immediately into the most challenging science courses in college. But Sale says that bigness has led to decline in general education. My observations confirm his view.

The size of the present classrooms and the number of students put together in the public schools also allows the relatively few disruptive students to exercise a larger and more dangerous influence than they could bring to a smaller setting. A bomb that goes off in a crowded post office destroys more than a similar bomb that goes off in a farmhouse kitchen.

It may be that the advent of computer technology will allow some kinds of education to be done in settings where disruptive students have no opportunity to destroy the learning environment for an entire class. What would happen if some of the students I saw had to spend some time every day before a user-friendly computer terminal, using programs that might teach them writing, history, or other forms of the humanities? The wild popularity of arcade computer games has proved that the computer can provide students with the kind of response that will keep them at a task. The isolation of computer-and-child, so deplored by many thinkers, may in fact be a gain

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in a public school system where learning in a crowd becomes almost impossible because of the indiscipline of a few. Many computer programs are being developed for the teaching of writing. Professor Richard Lanham, director of the writing program at U.C.L.A., employs a full-time computer programmer, and claims that he is successfully using several programs to teach writing at different levels. The computer cannot entirely replace teaching by a living, breathing human being. But the computer can be a supplement to the teacher, and it can respond to a student and make the student respond in turn.

In one of the public high schools, another team member and I briefly visited a TV studio where a young woman was teaching a small group of students to use a control panel activating TV cameras. The equipment was primitive, but the students were listening avidly to what the teacher said, and one by one they tried their hand at working the keys and the levers. The class had to be small for the group to cluster around the teacher and the console, and she could look directly into the face of every student in the group. I am told by others that students have a similar fascination with various sorts of computer learning. The critical elements seem to be a gadget that students can manipulate and a response that can be made both by a teacher and by the gadget itself, if it happens to be a computer. Technology now offers us the opportunity to make students concentrate on a learning mechanism that will respond to them with great effectiveness, and that response is made even more efficient if it can be coupled with a live teacher for at least some parts of the day. My intuitions told me that small-group learning offers a real possibility for reform in the large urban public schools. By "small," I mean groups of no more than five or six children around a teacher. Sometimes small-group learning might mean only one student working with a teacher and some kind of electronic aid.

But how are such small groups to be achieved? Perhaps we must begin by rethinking the daily schedule in the classroom. We now assume that students must go through six periods of classes and that teaching is naturally divided into forty-five or fifty-minute periods. Maybe we should revise our ideas of a schedule. Perhaps we have to put most kids at a given moment into some kind of holding tank—study halls in small rooms or computer rooms or something else—and have the others do specialized tasks in small groups under the

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supervision of a teacher. A small group might work in a small room at writing, another at reading, another at something else for an intense twenty-five minutes. And in some system of rotation, the groups might go from the teacher to study hall, while people in the study hall take their places in small groups.

My proposal would mean that there would be times when a lot of kids would be moving around in the school, and it might seem cumbersome to administer. And in the absence of better teacher training and higher teacher morale, my suggestion can have little value. An inept, unhappy teacher will do as badly with a small group or even with one student as with a large one. A small group underlining words or filling in the blanks on a piece of duplicated paper will find the experience just as inane as a large group doing the same thing. But I believe that in the long run, a reordering of the daily schedule to provide rotating, intense small-group instruction would result in higher efficiency. I have seen kids sitting for an hour in class and not learning anything. But put four or five students with a competent teacher for an intense twenty-five minutes, and make the teacher get each of them to respond, and you would be using that time far better than it was used in most of the classrooms I observed. The smallness of the group would reduce the disruption that goes unchecked in a large class of twenty-five or thirty kids. An audience of four or five or six is much more difficult to play to than an audience that seems to fill a room.

Above all, the nation must be made to understand just what is happening in the classroom and how much must be done. The glories of American education and its past accomplishments for our democracy still outshine the darkness that we see now. But the darkness is there, and it is profound, and it is spreading. It remains to be seen whether this country can summon the energy, the devotion, and the money to give the same care to educating our children that it once gave to the scientific sport of landing our tiny group of platitudinous engineers on the moon before the Russians could get there with theirs. Before we can carry out the radical reforms that are necessary in our schools, we must make our people radically aware of how bad the situation is, how threatening it is to our future as a democratic society, and how much there is to do.

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ENDNOTES

[1]Washington, D.C., 1983.
[2]Chapter "Education: Big School, Small School" (New York: Coward-McCann-Geoghegan, 1980), pp. 278-92.
[3]*The American High School Today* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).

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Stephen R. Graubard

Confronting the Obvious: Social Class and its Devastating Effects on American Schooling

THE SCHOOLS OF LIBERTYVILLE—public, private, and parochial—are defined less by their intellectual or educational qualities than by their social character. The public schools, with a single exception, recruit children almost exclusively from families of modest, often limited means. What distinguishes one school from another in the public sector is not that the black student population is 35 percent or 60 percent, the Hispanic student enrollment 10 percent or 30 percent—though these statistics are made much of—but whether the school in question recruits great numbers of children from the city's public housing projects. In all the public high schools, save one, the city's white population is significantly underrepresented. In this respect, as in many others, the schools here are little different from those in thousands of other cities across the country. The public schools are in no sense comprehensive; they reflect neither the social nor economic values of the community. No pride is taken in them. They are—remembering always the single exception—"storage bins," holding the children of the poor captive five days each week, though few of them attend in so regular or conscientious a fashion. These schools speak of privation, not so much in their deteriorated physical fabric as in their collapsed morale. It is difficult to know why certain of them exist at all, except that they are mandated by law and that parents are required to send their children to school.

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The city's private schools—the so-called independent schools—could not be more different. They are the protected enclaves of the white middle class, catering principally to the sons and daughters of business and professional people, who understand only too well that they opt for these fee-paying schools primarily to guarantee their children's competitiveness in vying for admission to the better colleges and universities of the country. Whether many of them in fact are admitted is a detail that is not much discussed. The important thing is that all these private schools have a purpose: they prepare their students for college. Each lives on its own economic resources, which in several instances appear to be surprisingly slender. While it is entirely appropriate for private schools to proclaim their poverty—indeed, to use it as an incentive for soliciting funds from alumni and parents—the suggestion that the school's "poverty" may actually affect the quality of its instruction is scrupulously avoided. There is never any suggestion that in this particular "small business" enterprise, undercapitalization can have significantly adverse effects. Still, when the question is posed why the private schools do so little to enroll children of poor families, of those who are disadvantaged and neglected, the answer is immediate—funds are lacking. The response suggests that if funds *did* exist, the schools would make a serious effort to enroll children of other races, nationalities, and social classes. Whether there is much truth in this—whether these schools would in fact respond to a windfall of new scholarship money by conscientiously seeking to recruit students from all the populations in the city, and what resistances such a policy would generate among parents and alumni—there is no way of knowing. The schools go on catering to those able (or willing) to pay what for some, at least, must appear to be substantial fees. One assumes that the "sacrifice" is made because these schools virtually guarantee college admission to those who graduate.

The Catholic schools of Libertyville are dominated by quite another set of values. They recruit their students principally from white working-class families. Though there are significant numbers of Hispanics in the city, including many newly arrived immigrants who are presumably Roman Catholic in their religious belief, their children are not much in evidence in the parochial schools. Nor, for that matter, are other of the immigrant populations, Catholic or not, well represented. Blacks are conspicuous by their absence. Whatever the

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situation may be elsewhere in the country, in this particular Catholic diocese, the schools remain predominantly white, serving essentially the children of established working-class families. Whether the parents of children of other races and social classes simply lack the funds to send their children to these schools, or whether they see no special advantage in such schooling, it is impossible to say. In any case, the Catholic school enrollments continue to decline even as the city teems with new Catholic immigrant populations.

Those who do choose parochial school for their children appear to be interested in one or another of their reputed qualities: the education they provide is in part religiously oriented; discipline, by some definition, is still enforced; the more vicious and disordered qualities of life in the public schools of the city are unknown. An unruly child in a Catholic school, a chronic delinquent or absentee, a "troublemaker," will in time be shown the door. While difficult adolescents may occasionally be admitted, they will not generally remain. That, in today's world, is thought to be a real boon, a "protection," a "security" worth paying for.

Reticence prevents most citizens in Libertyville from acknowledging these kinds of school distinctions. Unwilling to dwell on the substantial differences between public, private, and parochial schools, resisting any suggestion that their distinctiveness derives largely from social class differences, and that these violate any number of pretended social and moral norms that recommend inclusiveness in the name of democracy or religion, the myth is maintained that each of the systems has its own peculiar excellences. There is a general unwillingness to confront the real nature of the segregation that exists as between schools in these three sectors, to consider the origins of their "exclusivity," or to reflect on its probable consequences for children.

The absence of any commonly accepted definitions for characterizing social class in America today—for distinguishing between those who find themselves at the bottom of the social pile and those situated elsewhere, between those "on welfare" and those permanently or temporarily off, between those who work and are able to find work and those who have abandoned even the pretense of the search—suggests how delicate and complex the subject of social class has become. As for trying to estimate how any of these conditions affect the young—what moral and psychological problems they create—the effort appears so daunting as to dissuade most from even making

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the effort to understand. It is easier to go on citing percentages of white, black, Hispanic, Oriental, and other races and nationalities that attend the individual schools, pretending that such distinctions are the really significant ones. No one confronted with statistics that show three Libertyville schools with white student enrollments of 90 percent or more, would know from the statistics alone that the schools are fundamentally different, that one is Quaker, another Catholic, and the last public. In theory, the two religiously based schools should resemble each other closely. In fact, they do not, because each is dominated by a different ethos, aspires to a different accomplishment, takes for granted different values. Nor, except in a superficial sense, does the public "entrance examination" school resemble any of the private schools of the city.

The private schools are reluctant to acknowledge that they exist as the preserve of the middle class, that their mission is to defend the fundamental social values of that class. None pretends to enroll only those middle-class children known to be intelligent, industrious, and motivated. If the private schools depended on such children alone, there would always be empty seats in the classrooms. The middle-class American adolescent population of Libertyville is simply not large enough to provide great numbers of such exceptionally endowed candidates. In any case, it is not at all obvious that headmasters, trustees, and parents would care to see private schools recruit only from among the most "brilliant," assuming that they could in fact do so if they wished. The independent schools generally admit that their educational objectives transcend a simple concern with academic excellence. In insisting on the worth of athletic accomplishment, the importance of personality, citizenship, character, and the like, they make a virtue of necessity, proclaiming their readiness to welcome children who are likely to profit from the unique mix of opportunities that the private school is able to offer. Parents pay substantial tuition fees because they believe that they are maximizing their children's chances of gaining admission to a "good" college; small classes, close teacher supervision, the easy availability of counselling—personal, medical, and psychiatric—extracurricular activities, and highly developed athletic programs are all expected to produce a college candidate capable of winning a coveted place. If some private school students do not, there is nothing to suggest that they could have done at all better had they, for example, attended one of

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the city's public schools. The private school, whatever its insufficiencies—and there are many—generally achieves its principal purpose of serving as the college-preparatory institution its catalogue advertises it to be. It segregates students bound for college from those who "opt" for other pursuits, pretending that merit is involved in the segregation, and that it is based on intellectual ability alone.

What can be said of the educational objectives of the Catholic schools? Do they help to inculcate Christian values? Do they serve to develop distinctive qualities of personality and character? Are modesty and piety, for example, much esteemed? It is difficult to find conclusive answers to any of these matters, but observation of classroom behavior suggests that such qualities figure little in the lives of the students who attend these schools. Instead, one is impressed principally by the poverty of the institutions—their physical and intellectual insufficiency. While some part of this inadequacy must be ascribed to a lack of funds—teachers' salaries, for example, are literally derisory—a great part of the explanation seems to lie in the absence of clearly defined Catholic educational objectives. One set of purposes, once believed in, appears substantially lost; no new objectives appear to have been found. The instruction is uninspired; it does not have even the redeeming quality of appearing to prepare great numbers of its students for what is euphemistically called a "post-secondary school experience." In the absence of that objective, no other seems to commend itself. The Catholic schools, unlike the public schools of Libertyville, cannot claim to be suffering from an invasion of new kinds of students; their problem is simply that they do not know what to do even with the children of working-class employed parents.

The situation is many times more serious in the public schools, where children of the unemployed and underemployed gather. Even in the one "examination school," where entry is still determined by testing and where white students from middle-class homes predominate, many administrators and teachers speak of a certain falling-off in standards. In the other schools, which are obliged to accept substantial numbers for whom English is a second language, and those who in another day would have been relegated to special schools for physical, psychic, or other reasons, the problems of instruction seem almost insurmountable. Whatever social functions many of these

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public schools may claim to serve, it is obvious that their more formal educational purposes are minimal.

In the representations of the mass media, these are the schools of perpetual violence, drug-taking, insubordination, and near-chaos. In reality, at least as manifested in the schools visited in Libertyville, these phenomena are rare. Instead, one is impressed by the perpetual truancy and tardiness; also, by the eerie silences in the classroom that follow on the exaggerated noise that accompanies class change, by the locked cabinets that hold books that children can never be trusted to take home—distributed each period for class use only; by the apathy and boredom that permeate the buildings like a noxious fog. Students enter school each morning with nothing—not even the pencil they will often borrow from the teacher—and leave with nothing in the early afternoon—except for the meal (or meals) served them by kindly ladies in cellophane gloves—presumably to protect the students against unwanted germs.

One may regret the lost opportunities for education in the kind of instruction that many of the middle-class private schools are satisfied to dispense, recognizing that their objectives are far too simple; it is easy to deplore the inferior intellectual diet served the children of working-class parents by men and women who, however dedicated and well-meaning, have no understanding of their Catholic school mission; it is in the public schools, however, in the "houses of the dead," that one feels something of the tragedy of this country at this moment in its history. Little is being done in these schools correctly, and the fault is neither with indolent teachers nor with teachers frightened by physically aggressive and abusive adolescents. To visit these schools is to become aware of a searing possibility: *society has given up on many of its children;* they are being "stored" for a few hours each day, protected against possibly greater hazards outside.

And yet, as one looks more closely at schools in all three categories, one realizes that they are not of a piece; the middle-class schools are neither uniformly good nor universally mediocre; the "housing project" schools are not irretrievably bad. In each, as in the Catholic schools, there are certain compensating features that merit both reflection and comment. If all the imaginative and effective teaching is not being done in one kind of school, neither is all the inferior teaching occurring in another. In the best schools, as in the worst, good

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and bad teaching coexist, always intimately related to the capabilities of the individual teacher.

In most of the private schools, the traditional order and decorum of middle-class American life is obvious. Whether the school is old or new, the walls are generally freshly painted, the children scrubbed and braced (or at least their teeth are), and a number of them give the impression of being alert and interested. The teacher, man or woman, is generally identifiable as middle class, though speech, manner, and dress may betray that peculiar late twentieth century yearning to deny all class affiliation. The teacher in one room will choose to punctuate every sentence with "O.K.?" "Get it?" "you guys," and other contemporary phrases. In another, "being with it" will take another form; the teacher, imagining himself a latter-day John F. Kennedy, will appear breezy and self-assured, almost certainly unaware of his perpetual gaffes, of the fact that he makes a mistake in almost every sentence that he utters. His self-confidence is so total that he has little time to reflect on himself or his students. Is there no one in this class of moderately able students who recognizes the mistake he has made in writing a not too difficult word on the blackboard? Or, do some guess at the truth, even know it, but choose to show that beguiling charity the young are sometimes capable of when they confront the characteristic arrogance of those not yet solidly middle-aged? In another room there is genuine excitement, the response of engaged adolescents to effective teaching. A young woman, showing what another age might have called taste and grace, is able to involve the whole class, posing significant and difficult questions, and remaining calm—never once mistaking that quality for today's "cool." Overwhelmed neither by her own talents nor by those of certain of her more gifted students, she seems to accept both as natural. The woman has presence, knows her subject, likes children, cannot imagine patronizing them. The students respond eagerly; both engaged and distant, the teacher never pretends to be one of the group, while studiously avoiding even the slightest hint of condescension.

In other classrooms in these same middle-class schools, one may encounter pedantry and dullness, the consequence as often of a lack of imagination as a lack of skills. Surprisingly, also, the language used by the teachers is often ornate, precious, orotund; their questioning lacks nuance. These students are not learning to live with

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ambiguity. Instead, they are instructed to imagine that life is a succession of hurdles—in school, called tests—and that success is defined as the capacity to jump such barriers neatly and smartly. For every able teacher in these private schools—and there are many who are both conscientious and committed—there are others incapable of giving much more than the most conventional sorts of guidance. Inspired teaching, by definition, will always be uncommon; the task in the middle-class school is to lead young people away from a daily preoccupation with SAT scores or with Advanced Placement. Even more, it is to lead many of them away from the mediocrity of their home surroundings. Achieving that is no mean task. Children who speak of being "bored" in these fee-paying schools know all too well what they are suffering; some attention needs to be given to their complaint, though it need not be taken too gravely.

In the Catholic schools, the teaching is clearly inferior. It is not obvious whether the students are aware of how conventional (and banal) the instruction is. Whether the deplorably low salaries explain the performance of teachers—or whether it is the "second job" syndrome that explains the fatigue of so many, particularly the many who are required to hold a second job to maintain themselves and their families—the instruction is uninspired. Rote learning is common: teachers lecture; students copy. A class of six—an elective course—is conducted in precisely the same manner as a class of thirty in a required course. The temptation to lecture—often badly—is almost overwhelming. Students spend much of their time underlining passages. Blackboards, filled with detail that students are expected to copy, for reasons that are rarely obvious, serve as a teacher's principal instructional crutch. The questioning, when it occurs, is bland, simple; it is generally intended to elicit answers of one or two words. The students speak badly, ungrammatically, uninterestingly; teachers never correct them; only the most glaring errors are ever noted. Deportment in the classroom, while superficially good, is the result more of torpor than of design. Performance, by comparison, is almost invariably mediocre.

Still, exceptions need to be acknowledged. One teacher will make demands of a class that another will not think to make. The differences within an individual Catholic school may be striking. Still, one cannot fail to be struck by the sense of limited horizons and modest expectations. One rarely encounters the kinds of excitement present

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in an independent school class where a preoccupation with quality and excellence is almost palpable. In equipment, as in so much else, the Catholic schools give the impression of being impoverished; they are positively Spartan in their facilities, lacking what the middle class would define as necessary school "amenities." They are also spared, however, the more ridiculous pretenses of the private school world. There are no illusions of "antiquity" and "dignity" here, but then, they are not likely to speak of "first generation" private school students.

In the "housing project" public schools, as in almost all the others in the public sector, there is no pretense whatever. Everything is out in the open, and much of what is observable is not attractive. The students, however, are surprisingly diverse, not only in their race and ethnic identities, but also in their enthusiasms. Some appear positively moribund; others are alert. Latin Americans are conspicuous; so, also, are Asians. The students' family names suggest Portuguese, Italian, Irish, and Spanish ancestry. Blacks are everywhere. Students are rarely asked to perform in class. To read aloud, for example, would, it is said, be an embarrassment that students would rather be spared. Such, at least, is the explanation given for the fact that the students appear most frequently to be working alone, silently copying. After order in the classroom is established—a procedure that may take ten or fifteen minutes—books (and pencils) distributed, and students come to the teacher's desk for the third time for a sheet of paper or to ask a simple question, the few remaining moments of the period are spent in copying from a book or the blackboard. When the bell rings, one suddenly realizes that few words have been spoken, that few (if any) questions have been asked. The students have indeed been kept busy, but it is difficult to know precisely what they have done.

Still, it is not always like this in the classrooms of the public schools. In some, a minority admittedly, the teacher may be as active and involved as any of the best teachers in a predominantly middle-class school. Questions will be asked, problems posed, and a genuine effort will be made to involve all the students. The teacher, contending with what would otherwise be an unnatural silence, is actively resisting the idea that the object of school is to create tranquillity, or at least a semblance of order. Some other good is clearly being sought, though it is rarely articulated in these terms.

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Though all the rooms in a given public school are presumably serviced by the same custodial staff, some are untidy and disordered, lacking any kind of arresting detail; others are filled with objects and exhibits, neatly arranged, reflecting the personality and interests of the teacher. One room appears barren and unkempt; another has posters, files, books, and displays, testifying to the teacher's involvement. It is worth considering whether the teacher in the unkempt room will not often resemble his surroundings, arriving at school more disheveled than his poorest charges, while the other, positively "bourgeois" by comparison, may seem almost too impeccable in speech, dress, and manner. A question insinuates itself: Is one preferable to the other? Has the time come to consider a dress code for teachers, particularly for teachers assigned to schools of the poor?

The question is not asked facetiously. Until we understand better how children of America's "housing projects" can be motivated to attend school regularly, there is no hope of educating them. It is not enough to say that parents have an obligation to send their children to school. Many do not understand the responsibility, and there is no prospect of law or opinion being used to compel them to do so. Until we know why the child is truant, and how that truancy relates to the general condition of the family—whether it originates in the child being the only English-speaking member of the family, relied on to take an ailing mother regularly to hospitals for treatment, or whether it stems from the drunkenness of one or both parents, from the fact that the family is awake half the night watching a succession of "late, late shows," or that older siblings, destructive and threatening, create serious emotional and psychological problems for the child—we will know nothing of the sources of the student's truancy. Lacking such knowledge, knowing nothing of how the child himself contributes to his delinquency—or of how desperate the parents (or parent) may be, how totally lacking in resources to cope with adolescent rebellion—it is impossible for the situation to remedy itself. Sending truant officers, creating parent committees in the "project," who undertake to knock on apartment doors to rouse sleeping adolescents who have been reported absent and then packing them off to school, are reasonable measures calculated to help, but no school attendance program can ever substitute for an instructional program that is believed in, and supported by, substantial numbers of teachers and students.

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This, indeed, is the heart of any solution to the public school problems of the cities of America today.

So long as nothing is going on in the classrooms, there is little point in insisting on the child being there. In the absence of an active instructional program involving the student in something other than copying from a book onto a sheet of paper, there is no justification for trying to hold the student's parents responsible for school attendance. In any case, the "housing project" parent is rarely an individual who corresponds in any meaningful way to the middle-class academic's notion of a committed PTA member. The teacher in such schools may be the only person who can reach the child on a continuing basis, with a message that is not likely to be heard either at home or in the "project." The teacher who manages to quiet the tribe ten minutes after the start of class, who imagines that all major responsibilities are met if physical violence in the classroom is avoided, and who achieves this feat principally by using voice and language redolent of nothing so much as the noise of the "project"—to which the student returns each day after his obligatory "sitting around" and "messing around" in school—has no understanding of the profession of teacher. Such a teacher has become a police officer, and in the faculty dining room during lunch, these police attributes are painfully evident. Whether it is the need to let off steam that explains the teachers' ghoulish conversation—the general preoccupation with the latest antics of some impossible adolescent given to forms of exhibitionism that are indeed funny—or whether the conversation reveals a more fundamental antipathy to "savages" whose total conversation with adult authority involves such grandiloquent phrases as "Teach, I need a pencil" and "Can I go to the bathroom now?" it is impossible to say. In these public schools, silence is the certain sign of failure, which does not imply of course that noise is the signal of success. Silence, as a requirement imposed by teachers who want simply to get through the day, without incident, is the remedy of those defeated by adolescents whom they neither understand nor care for.

If the public schools of Libertyville were hermetically sealed off from the Catholic and the independent schools, their importance would still be great. To an extent not always appreciated, the significance of the "housing project" schools is precisely that they do so much to illuminate the educational insufficiencies of other schools—Catholic and private—that are not required to cope with instruction-

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al problems created by chronic truancy, general illiteracy, and the perpetual threat of physical violence. Where parents can be relied on to send their children to school each day, guaranteeing that some hours in every week, Monday through Friday, are indeed television-free, student indiscipline is clearly less of a problem. By any number of criteria, easily verified, students coming from such stable families generally do learn more. They score more highly in objective tests than do students in the "projects," and the differences must be ascribed in some part to what is achieved in the classroom. The question, however, is not whether certain middle-class and working-class students, liberated from the public school system by their parents' willingness to pay fees, do not in fact learn more, but whether many even in these putatively more selective schools are not intellectually malnourished, whether the academic diet they are served is not too paltry, whether the standards set for their academic performance are not embarrassingly modest. How many of these students are able to write or speak with precision and accuracy? Do significant numbers ever acquire the habit of reading, let alone the habit of reflection? How many command a foreign language? What confidence do they show in their intellectual abilities? Are they not also being cheated, fobbed off with education that is pedestrian? The fact that the greatest number of them are docile—that they are not the principal "troublemakers" of the city—that their names do not generally appear on police blotters, may make them "invisible," the inconspicuous members of an age cohort that is also being "shelved," however unostentatiously, and for the middle class, only temporarily.

To visit the classrooms of schools that are virtually wholly white—whether in middle-class private schools or in working-class Catholic schools—is to be aware of how much American education today, above the housing project level, depends on the teacher lecturing and the student responding to set questions in a few words, rarely in full sentences. The testing that goes on is perpetual, much of it relying on so-called objective criteria, where multiple choice questions are thought to be sufficient. Tests are used principally to guarantee student seriousness. In fact, they serve principally as measures to gauge a capacity to memorize, too often of inconsequential things not worth committing to memory. The infantalizing of too many American adolescents, even of the children of the supposedly successful, not to speak of those who come from solid working-class families, is

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achieved as much through the insufficiencies of their educational fare as through the brutishness of the adult films and the simplicities of the popular television they are habitually exposed to.

Does this suggest that there is little good teaching in Libertyville? Not at all. In many schools, individual teachers perform admirably. Such performance is linked to two qualities: a capacity to enjoy children and knowledge of subject, sometimes, even, an exaggerated sense of its importance. Beneath the teaching "stars," however, almost always recognized as such, there are several thousand less gifted and less luminous men and women capable of giving a great deal. If most schools have a "swamp," where most students are to be found, there will also, generally, be one for teachers, too. The problem in education today is not to search for a greater number of charismatic souls, capable of lighting the way for bewildered adolescents who crave guidance. Rather, it is to provide wholly new teaching incentives to men and women who are themselves ordinary—as ordinary as the doctors, lawyers, professors, salesmen, factory workers, secretaries, clerks, unemployed, and semiemployed who have no choice but to send them their ordinary sons and daughters, with the hope that they will be instructed and formed.

Why does this need to be said? Because failing such a frank avowal of the true situation of students and teachers in America's schools today, it is possible to believe that certain schools are doing admirably, that others are failing totally. A close examination of the schools of Libertyville suggests no such sharp dichotomy. This does not imply that the white middle-class schools put one in mind of the "housing project" schools, or that either fundamentally resembles the Catholic schools of the city; it does suggest, however, that no one of them, in the quality of instruction that it offers, particularly in English, foreign languages, and history/social studies—the disciplines observed—is performing so admirably that its achievement can serve as the model that others would be well advised to emulate, if only they could (and would).

Can the story of Libertyville be taken, then, to tell something of the story of secondary school education in cities and towns throughout the land? Without pretending that Libertyville is typical—that all other systems are precisely like the one described here—a few generalizations are possible. In the best middle-class schools, for example, English instruction appears to be energetically pursued. Middle-class

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adolescents, girls perhaps more frequently than boys, show impressive analytical powers in deciphering the meaning of a text. Confronted with a difficult literary work in prose or poetry, and required to make sense of it, to compare it with others, to comment on its meaning, they appear to find the challenge compelling. They certainly understand what is being asked for, and take pleasure in puzzling through the interpretive issues that are set for them. The less gifted and the less imaginative show less capacity in all this, but even their performance is not without a certain distinction. The same, regrettably, cannot be said of their speech more generally. American middle-class children, as observed in Libertyville, seem almost inhibited in their speech. Their language is often pedestrian; their syntax is weak; they speak with little felicity or grace. Their observations are too often conventional. Few show signs of possessing what another age might have called a command of literary culture. Reading does not appear to be a habit that many pursue with great passion.

Among the children of working-class parents, both in the Catholic schools and in the public schools, there is substantially less interest and less accomplishment. English, in these schools, appears to be dominated by a more traditional concern with teaching grammar and syntax. Parsing a sentence, spelling correctly, and writing neatly are considered by many teachers in these schools to serve a more useful purpose than demonstrating an ability to interpret Auden or Eliot. The intention is obviously good; the performance leaves much to be demanded. Specimens of writing—even those attached to bulletin boards to show exemplary achievement—seem quite ordinary. In these schools, student speech is appalling; all too often, it verges on the illiterate. There is no pretense here of even aspiring to introduce students to a literary tradition. Instead, there is silent drill, silent copying, silent testing. It is difficult to know precisely what English is being taught or what the students are learning. The fact that English is a second language for many—and that their command of their mother tongue is simple in the extreme—complicates the problem for both teacher and student. The extent of the reading and spelling disabilities of students are generally known; many teachers despair of adolescents said to be reading two, three, four, or more years below their grade level. What all this means—whether it is indeed significant—and how any of it can be remedied remains as divisive an educational issue as any that afflicts the schools today.

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In foreign language instruction, many of Libertyville's public schools are only marginally involved. A few offer a single language; Italian is often preferred. The course, an elective, is chosen by relatively few students for reasons that are almost wholly obscure. The reputation of individual teachers may have substantial importance. In several instances, the elementary foreign languages are well taught; the children seem to revel in the problem-solving involved, genuinely enjoying whatever linguistic successes they achieve. It is good for them to know when they have answered correctly; they do not appear unduly depressed when they discover that they have made an error. Some give the impression of taking pleasure in the mere sound of the language, enjoying the mimicry that is required. The instruction engages them; they recite, read, answer questions, and, very occasionally, construct whole sentences. If any criticism can be made of this elementary instruction, it is that it moves at a snail's pace. Denied the use of books at home, public school students depend substantially on mimeographed sheets distributed in class. Inevitably, progress is slow.

Comparable instruction exists in all the middle-class schools. There, one would expect the importance of foreign language instruction to be understood and dwelled upon. Such, in fact, is not the case. Conventional grammar is emphasized, vocabulary is memorized; traditional texts are read. The purpose of the foreign language instruction is wholly obscure. Indeed, the level of discourse in the foreign language, in all the schools visited, was disappointingly low. It would appear that most ordinary adolescent Americans find it immensely difficult to speak a foreign language fluently in consecutive sentences or to translate rapidly, and to do all this correctly and confidently. In the best middle-class schools, particularly where students are preparing for AP exams, the achievement is only marginally better. With one or two noteworthy exceptions—generally of students who have spent months or years abroad with their parents—there is a marked incapacity to speak correctly. While it would be invidious to recommend a specific reading list for advanced courses, one wonders why in certain languages—French, for example—the literary texts used today are precisely those used half a century ago, and whether more compelling literature could not be offered. The social values of the 1920s and 1930s, with their easy assumption that certain works are "classics," and for that reason alone are worth knowing, does not

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lead teachers to ask whether the student "exposure" to the text in fact brings a command of its meaning that has any utility. French is today the language of many nations outside the hexagon; insufficient thought is given to what French literary and other texts might be made available to an American middle-class child who is not likely to appreciate the finer points about the meaning of "honor" in seventeenth century France. Language labs (and the like), where they exist, do not seem to work at all well. Students are neither quick readers nor confident speakers. Indeed, for too many, foreign language instruction is an exercise in childish babble.

Finally, my own field—history/social studies. With few exceptions, instruction in these disciplines, in the schools observed, seems disconcertingly simple. The failure may be represented, symbolically, by the decision of a middle-class school, proud of its academic distinction, to use as its assigned modern European history text a book written by a scholar dead for almost forty years. Is it possible to imagine a physics course being taught from a textbook prepared by a physicist who died in 1945? The situation is not appreciably improved by the fact that the text in question—a valuable publisher's property—has been brought up-to-date chronologically, with several new chapters added, prepared by a "hack" specifically hired for the purpose. The teacher, perhaps recognizing the incongruity of the situation, acknowledges that he does not much use the text, preferring to lecture himself. In most of the public schools, texts are passed out; students, scarcely able to read, are instructed, in a course on Western civilization, that Japan is a country of many islands, and the five principal ones are named. Whether this information is then supposed to be committed to memory—whether any of it is so preserved—and whether it is then used in the multiple choice exams that are given, depends wholly on the teacher's whim. His judgment of what is important, while not capricious, is not wholly reliable. In any case, the teacher is generally silent; his students read and scribble, puzzling out the meaning of a text that at the end of class will again be committed to a locked closet. In a civics course at one of the middle schools, an attempt was made to engage the children; questions were asked from a newsletter, commercially published, distributed each week. The students showed little understanding of what was being said; it all seemed "foreign" and irrelevant to them.

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In all these schools, as in most American schools, the study of American history is obligatory. The textbooks used are often good. The teacher's commentary may or may not be; one sometimes craves for the silences of the "housing project" schools. Students are generally given five reasons, four causes, three effects, and all this is done in such a way as scarcely to challenge the more conventional opinions of our day. When the past is treated, it is almost always in the context of the present. The result, inevitably, is a distorted image of the past and an ideologically naive representation of the present. European history, even at certain of the best schools, shows little evidence of the influence of contemporary historical scholarship. Indeed, in many instances, the story told forty years ago is told again today—less eloquently, perhaps— but no less determinedly. All the large interpretive changes that have occurred, that have made history one of the more lively of the contemporary social sciences, with significant implications for young and old, are substantially ignored. Instead, old-fashioned narrative history is communicated; very little effort is made to tell new stories of a kind likely to engage a new generation. The story of the movement of populations, of changed family relations, of altered patterns of work and leisure, are sacrificed to an old-fashioned account of the horrors of American imperialism or the flaws of European diplomacy. The incapacity to perceive any "stories" in science and technology, to fail entirely to give students some sense of time and place, is regrettable. There is little suggestion that there is a great world outside America, with its own distinctive institutions and problems, whose importance needs to be considered. The student is rarely stretched to consider conditions significantly different from those with which he or she is already familiar. The story is "lifeless," made lively, if at all, by an excited narrator, an accomplished orator. The emphasis, in the best schools, is on using "original texts," useful, it is fondly hoped, for preparing "research papers," in a library. Much of this, sad to say, is a kind of "play at being a scholar"; it produces the "scissors-and-paste history" that R.G. Collingwood so rightly abominated. Thinking about the world, today and yesterday, knowing its geography in some detail, having a sense of what historians and other social scientists are arguing about, understanding why names and dates are not the only "building blocks" of history, and why the purpose of historical study is in considerable part analytical—that it involves reading and interpreting

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texts, knowing how to use evidence, and understanding what evidence is—do not seem to be what many schoolteachers are greatly preoccupied with doing. Instead, the old American folktale, told many times previously, is told again, together with the usual sorry and sordid details about Europe, and of its recent decline and fall.

Given these conditions, is there any hope for America's schools? Yes, if cognizance is taken of the fact that very few of them are very good and that it is not only the public schools that have entered a time of massive decline. There is no point in pretending that educational conditions in the country were once better. We cannot be certain that they were; in any case, what was possible in 1910 is not going to be possible in the 1980s and 1990s. The "housing projects" of today are not at all like the slums of the Lower East Side in New York half a century or longer ago. It is not that they are worse—though they may indeed be—but only that they are different. Catholicism today, and not only at the level of the bishops, is not the Catholicism of an earlier time. Again, it is not only that the "faithful" think differently, believe differently, but that all the support services once in place are no longer there or appear to be in jeopardy. So, also, with the vaunted middle class. The story of why that class abandoned the public schools of the city is not wholly edifying—but there is no point in rehearsing that sad tale again.

The simple fact is that the schools of the country are substantially class-ridden. While comparable conditions exist elsewhere in the world and are the subject of close and continuing scrutiny, sometimes of purposeful action by powerful political authority, there are no simple solutions anywhere to the educational (and social) problems involved. There are few countries in the world that have been able to overcome social class bias in their educational systems. Most have simply learned how to live with it.

There is no evidence to suggest that the United States will be able to do so. The reasons are complex, but they almost certainly have to do with the fact that the country's fundamental beliefs are rendered suspect by the brazen untruths that the existing educational system is intended to conceal. While the system is defended as an expression of freedom—with parents being invited to choose whatever they think to be best for their children—the conditions that prevail today make a mockery of that pretended choice. It does not exist for most, and even those who are financially able to afford private education of the

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most expensive kind know that they are often getting an insufficient return on their investment. It is a choice between much that is known to be meretricious, that is accepted only because no alternative appears in sight. This is no choice at all. Whether it will be accepted in the future depends to a great extent on an intellectual debate that this country needs desperately to initiate: What kind of a people have we become; what kind of a people do we wish to be? How can we revive our schools, *all* our schools? Does that achievement not depend on our knowing why we educate, why it is not enough for schools to be corridors or storage vaults, claiming a success that is modest and unconvincing in all too many instances? We are woefully deficient in establishing and debating the rationale for what we do. Indeed, we seem scarcely able to confront the question.

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Paula M. Evans

Teaching History in Libertyville

NO VISITOR TO THE SCHOOLS OF LIBERTYVILLE could fail to be struck by how little the reforms of the past twenty-five years have affected the secondary schools there, nor, despite significant differences in resources and population, how similar are the experiences of students in public, parochial, and private schools. Routine, repetition, and drudgery, punctuated by isolated moments of excitement, challenge, and wonder, still characterize most classrooms. This unhappy observation emerges from extensive visits to classes and talks with teachers and administrators in Libertyville. My focus throughout was on the nature and quality of classroom experience—the ways students interact with teachers, peers, and subject matter—for this experience determines to a large extent how students view the humanities, history, school, and themselves. The perspective I have chosen ignores many factors that shape the impact of schooling, but it permits an emphasis on teaching, which is, after all, the core of the schooling process. What follows are more specific impressions culled from what I saw in Libertyville's classrooms and some implications for change that derive from these observations.

One immediate observation is that the student bodies of public, parochial, and private schools differ sharply. The public schools, having witnessed an exodus of white middle-class students, serve a largely minority poor population and have high rates of absenteeism and dropout (individual classes ordinarily enroll thirty students and often dwindle to fifteen). The parochial schools serve a predominantly white lower-middle-class population, and although they would

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like to reach out to minority students, they lack the scholarship funds to do so. The stronger attendance rate at the parochial schools makes large classes of thirty or more students mandatory. The private schools serve an almost exclusively white upper-middle-class population—though they claim to be interested in diversity—and have small classes (rarely exceeding fifteen) and excellent attendance.

These demographic characteristics are traditionally thought to affect not only the ethos, agenda, and outcome of individual classes, but a teacher's effectiveness and the students' motivation as well. Indeed, the significance of these differences in composition and class size should not be underestimated. Yet, to observe classrooms and focus on the teacher's approach to content and methodology is to recognize that public, parochial, and private schools resemble each other much more than they differ. An unimaginative interpretation of history, a limited range of teaching strategies, and a narrow conception of the teacher's role and the student's responsibilities predominate everywhere.

The teacher's understanding of subject matter and of the relationship of that body of knowledge to the students is central to the learning process. Although the teaching of Western civilization to freshmen, American history to seniors, and civics to a class of recent immigrants would each seem to demand different approaches to content, their treatment in most Libertyville schools is uniformly similar. History is Gettysburg and the strategies of the Confederate army, the evolution of towns in the Middle Ages, lists of kings and treaties and dates, the intricacies of the American Constitution, Progressivism and Conservatism, and more names, dates, and battles. Social studies may include American government, sociology and psychology, law and politics. In each case, the curriculum consists of a prescribed, atomized body of material that the teacher transmits to students, who then absorb it and recite it back.

The level of discussion in public and parochial schools never moves beyond questions such as "What was the United States looking for when it turned to violence during the American Revolution?" Students give several one-word responses, which the teacher dismisses in a friendly manner, until someone finally says, "Respect." Satisfied, the teacher resumes the lecture. When students do ask provocative questions—"Could Ireland survive on its own if separated from Britain? I mean, does it have enough industry?"—the teacher wavers.

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Confused and inarticulate, he elicits no further discussion on the issue and never answers the question other than to say, "Well, Ireland would have to trade with other nations."

In private schools, the content of history/social studies courses is on occasion more sophisticated and complex. In one class in American diplomatic history, discussion questions range from "What did the tone of the Neutrality Act signal to aggressors?" to broader inquiry about the responsibility of the United States and the European nations for growing world chaos between the two world wars. Students refer to events and conditions in the 1920s and 1930s; they consider the self-delusion of various countries, pose questions, and recognize dilemmas that have no clear answers. In another class, the students discuss nepotism as practiced during the American Revolution. They raise questions about the political intrigue of the 1700s and compare it with examples of nepotism today. There is, at least, the opportunity in both of these classes to challenge a superficial interpretation of history, to contribute one's own definition of history to what has already been written in stone, and to examine the political, social, and psychological elements central to any study of history. The study of history in these classes may not be ideal,[1] but the teaching does demand a level of thinking that requires interpretation and analysis.

In many classes in all of the schools, history is a tedious series of unrelated facts that many students find confusing and irrelevant. "What is the Gettysburg Address?" asks one public school student after the class has struggled to identify its author. "It was a speech to dedicate a cemetery. Lots of people died there," responds the teacher. "Who was fighting?" asks another student. The teacher, frustrated and obviously exhausted, reminds the students that they have gone over all that last week. Whether the lesson focuses on the Federal Reserve Bank, current events, or World War II, the material as presented has little relation to the lives of the students, to their experience of history's impact—or lack of it—on everyday life, or to a larger historical tradition and process. Since students learn material by book chapter, most of the course content exists as discrete morsels of information, presented, apart from their chronology, in a vacuum. Students learn that "history repeats itself," though no one ever bothers to explain how or why. At the same time, they are told that the lessons of the past, if they are heeded, may prevent future mistakes.

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Yet this obvious contradiction never leads to an exciting exchange of hypotheses, predictions, and questions. There is little effort to incorporate the students' perspective or life experience into the study of the historical process. Their native interest and curiosity are, unwittingly or not, untapped and often squelched. The task of the students is, first and foremost, to commit facts to memory.

This approach not only reinforces the students' misconception that history is static, but tends always to the simplistic, offers no sense of immediacy, and makes minimal demands upon them. Furthermore, it encourages a passivity that is directly contrary to the engagement demanded of historians, anthropologists, or political scientists.[2] There is little open discussion of controversial issues. In fact, there is little controversy. History is only a record of the past. Lack of active student participation is most striking in the public and parochial schools. Even in one of the best public school classes I observed, where the teacher clearly likes his subject and his students and they feel free to interrupt the lecture ("If they had towns, why didn't they have schools?" "What was going on in Spain during this time?"), when one enthusiastic student commented without raising his hand, the teacher responded by saying, "Raise your hand. You're breaking my train of thought."

Perhaps the most numbing tool used to reinforce passivity among students—and a mainstay in Libertyville's public and parochial schools—is the prepackaged worksheet, in which vocabulary building, the charting of information, and the identification of important names, dates, and events are emphasized. Teachers make heavy use of worksheets, and students, who have come to expect this "seat work," are generally cooperative. High-school juniors and seniors studying American history will answer questions like the following:

In 1883 Confederate General Robert E. Lee decided to *invade* Pennsylvania. To invade an area is to:

a. pull back from it
b. give it warning
c. attack and enter it
d. make peace with it

The dispute over Missouri in 1820 was settled for a time by a _____ _____, a middle-of-the-road agreement that both sides could accept.

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"Compromise" is listed above several similar questions with five other word choices.

With some exceptions, the private school classrooms allow more flexibility and conversation, with students interrupting, questionning, and responding more openly. There is laughter and greater interaction between students. The atmosphere is less formal, less rigid. Nonetheless, in spite of an environment more conducive to learning, the involvement vital to a good class is often missing. A fifty-minute European history class seems to stretch on interminably. The class is reviewing last week's test in which questions demanded analysis and a well-stocked memory bank. The true/false and identification sections of the test required students to recall dozens of facts, names, and dates (Treaty of Westphalia, Edict of Nantes, Council of Trent, etc.). As the students go over the exam together, their mastery of the material is obvious, as, in some cases, is their curiosity about it. "Were the Popes always old? How could they be powerful when they were so old?" The teacher breezes past these questions to attend to a more relevant one about the grading system used for the exam. The raw materials, a small group of intelligent, well-motivated students and interesting history, are present in this classroom, but it is difficult to imagine this teacher and class in animated discussion. The teacher has good command of the subject matter, and the students are generally responsive. Yet, the history feels stripped of vitality. The jousting for power, the jealousies, the personal and institutional vendettas, the compromises, the bloodshed in the name of religion—all are reduced to a chronology of events. How events relate to personal motivations and political necessity is not explored, nor is there any reference to the relationship of these events to the lives of the common people, people not unlike these students or this teacher. The material lacks relevance in the broadest sense of the term. It depersonalizes history and relegates it to a domain beyond human interference or influence. The best private school history classes do begin to approach the content of history as the rich, provocative, and challenging resource it is. For the most part, however, the private school emphasis, too, is on "getting through" the material. The potential for an exhilarating study of history is never realized.

Given their devotion to a relatively rigid textbook interpretation of history, one might expect teachers to be actively concerned about their teaching materials, but this is generally not the case. Public and

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parochial school teachers seem to accept uncomplainingly a curriculum handed down from the central office or from the principal, even though such a prepackaged plan of study hardly encourages a teacher's creativity and intellectual curiosity. No one I talked with suggested that curriculum might be planned or organized in any other way. One public school teacher explained that he likes the American history text he uses because it has good reviews and tests at the end of each chapter. "If you deal too much with the abstract, you can't measure what they've learned." ("Abstract" refers to the ambiguous, the hypothetical—which of course do not lend themselves to concrete right or wrong answers.) His text and tests limit the definition and experience of history to his specifications. Only one teacher mentioned the lack of supplementary materials that might enrich the curriculum. Most teachers' thinking about course content is limited to such comments as, "We ought to offer two years of U.S. history instead of one. Kids today don't know enough about their own country."

Though teachers in the private schools have greater opportunity to develop a rich program, many follow the traditional text with only minor alterations. Thus it is possible for a "Humanities" course to consist of little more than a compendium of discrete spelling, vocabulary, and grammar lessons unrelated to a history lesson that students read silently and respond to in writing. Even in the best schools, the content of history/social studies courses is too often passed on unthinkingly by teachers and lacks depth, scope, and vitality.

It may already be clear that this static, simplistic view of history is accompanied by a teaching style that is equally unimaginative and insensitive. Teachers in all the schools enjoy talking; they play to a captive audience. In every class I observed, the teacher dominated the action, spent most of the time talking *at* students, rarely demanded a response of more than a sentence or two, and never asked students to listen or respond to one another. In public and parochial schools, students were always seated in rows and often scattered about the room, separated by clumps of empty chairs. Only two of the teachers I observed moved from the front of the room and walked in between rows of students. Teachers rarely made eye contact with every student; it just didn't seem to be important to them. They made no effort to create an atmosphere in which students might hear one an-

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other. In a class of thirty-five students, group discussion is not only difficult but, apparently, also risky. As one parochial school teacher explained: "I tried breaking them into groups once. It was like the United Nations in here, just too noisy. I stick to the lecture format."

In private schools, with smaller classes and more intimate, less institutional classrooms, there is more contact between teachers and students. Some teachers are more relaxed, less afraid of losing control. They might seat students in a circle. Nevertheless, they seem not to have thought much about the format of a class and its implications for teaching and learning. In one class of fifteen students, frequent interruptions, changes from one exercise book to another, constant movement within the classroom, and a general buzz from a neighboring class sharing the same open space fragmented attention and produced a feeling of frenzy. The intentions were contemporary; the implementation, ill-conceived. But above all, in every public, parochial, and private school history class, regardless of size, physical space, or seating plan, the lecture predominates. Rather than risk the chaos of a "United Nations," teachers everywhere in Libertyville "stick to the lecture format."

For public and parochial school teachers, the weekly test complements their lectures and student worksheets. Some students respond to the pressure of evaluation, while others seem to have given up long ago the possibility of success. Teacher encouragement is often halfhearted or sarcastic: "Think. Think if possible." "Try to pass." "You're guessing. You're guessing. Everybody wants to know the answer. No one wants to *work* to find the answer." In many of these classes, few students raise hands to answer questions. Some read magazines, do homework for other classes, or whisper with friends; others sit quietly and passively, their minds seemingly far from the classroom, the teacher, the lesson. I never saw a teacher try to involve a student on the fringes of the class. In the most extreme case, when a class was on the verge of total disintegration, those students occupying themselves with some activity unrelated to the class were left alone for the entire period.

Teachers do not adjust their instructional strategies to meet different student needs. Private school teachers perhaps have little incentive to do so. Compared to the students of the other schools, theirs have fewer learning problems, higher academic motivation, greater worldliness, and, often, stronger support systems. Since they usually

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read what is assigned, complete their written work, and maintain classroom decorum, the teachers are likely to feel successful and content. Public and parochial school teachers are faced with a very different level of student motivation, behavior, and competence (and frightening failure and drop-out rates), and therefore feel much less successful. Yet they continue to approach their students in the most tedious, pedestrian ways. (Many, in fact, seem to view their chief aim as control.) Rather than search for new, more inviting, appropriate materials and methods, they present—with little hope of making any headway—the same material over and over again, and periodically become discouraged or angry when their students fail to respond. To all appearances, they have abandoned meaningful instructional standards for themselves and significant academic expectations for their students.

What comes through clearly in their conversation with visitors is the feeling that many of their difficulties lie with the students—whom they frequently refer to as "our clientele." A public school teacher confides, "You have to understand that our population has changed dramatically. These kids, many of them, can barely read. We used to have quite a few middle-class kids in this school. In fact, we even had some Jewish kids." Teachers feel that their students are poorly motivated and often blame the parents. "The parents of these girls don't have much invested in education. They don't plan to send them to college. They just want them to get married," states a parochial school teacher. At a public high school with a 50 percent drop-out rate, an administrator attributes the problem to the number of Portuguese students in the school: "The Portuguese culture reinforces a limited education for girls. They almost always drop out of high school, regardless of their academic record, to marry and work in the mills." These educators, like most I observed, do not dislike their students; they are simply overwhelmed and bewildered by them, and seem to lack the skills that might create a more satisfying and successful learning experience. They feel impotent and thus angry, despairing, and, finally, apathetic.

Although they ignore their own role in their students' failures, it is important not to dismiss the public and parochial school teachers' complaints about their "clientele"; it *has* changed. All teachers have always had to work with students who learn slowly and who do not readily succeed in school. At the secondary level, these students gen-

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erally populate the lowest track. Given a choice, few teachers have traditionally opted to teach only the lowest track, the noncollege-bound students. The low levels of success and prestige that come from teaching these classes has sometimes led administrators to assign them to the most delinquent, inadequate teachers as punishment. In Libertyville, as in other cities, the lowest track has, in fact, *become* the public school. At the same time, it is increasingly clear that the "American Dream" has largely evaporated as a realizable goal for today's marginal students.

Educators have recognized this dilemma. Although federal and state governments have inundated inner-city schools with programs and resources for poor and minority children, there has been no serious, well-conceived long-range effort made to restructure the educational system. Instead, there have been periodic attempts to create new forums and formats for learning ("Head Start," mainstreaming, etc.), to retrain teachers, and to design curriculum packets (National Science Foundation curriculum, "Man: A Course of Study," New Math). As pointed out in the recent report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, the declining quality of education "stems more from weakness of purpose, confusion of vision, underuse of talent, and lack of leadership than from conditions beyond our control."[3] The result in many public schools—and Libertyville is no exception—has been one new program after another, programs that involve little planning at the school level and frequently have no clear relevance to an individual school or district. These numerous projects more often confuse and muddle rather than clarify and reform. Most fail to address the issue of teachers' attitudes about themselves, their students, or their job. They do not impact on most teachers, who continue to cling to traditional models for teaching and learning. The end result is that students who are unable to express their thoughts verbally are never required to respond with more than a sentence. Students with poor writing skills, rather than being taught to write, complete multiple choice, true/false, and one-word identification problems. Students reading below grade level read less, not more. The cycle is vicious; the most needy receive the most limited education.

These observations create a rather depressing portrait of the history classroom, one where the interpretation and presentation of the

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subject is dreary, the student population, increasingly complex and needy, and the definitions of teacher, student, and learning, stale. Teachers, school administrators, concerned citizens, politicians, and others respond to the problem in a variety of ways. The administrators of Libertyville's public, parochial, and private schools offer only little solace. Public school administrators are unsure about their schools' effectiveness. They do not know whether the schools are achieving "minimum competency goals," and are undecided about what the course of study should include, how many years of social studies should be required, whether there should be a foreign language requirement. What should students learn is a question that seems harder and harder to answer. One administrator asked to describe curriculum development within the system replied with only one word: haphazard. Courses are added here, deleted there, all without benefit of an organized plan. There is no supervision of teachers in Libertyville's public schools by department heads, whose major function is to inventory books. Teachers observe one another's classes rarely, if ever. Since no one enters their classrooms, there is little accountability. One administrator concludes, "Only in rare instances do you see people excited about their teaching. For the most part, the teaching is lazy, and not just in Libertyville. Our first priority must be to change attitude."

The parochial schools suffer similar ills. Their own particular set of circumstances—declining enrollments, pitiful salaries, and lack of organization—present major obstacles to a serious evaluation of curriculum and methodology. Every parochial school is responsible for its own curriculum. There is virtually no communication between one social studies department and another. In some cases, a department consists of one person. Curriculum development is almost nonexistent. Every three years a team visits each school to observe classes, examine curriculum, and, presumably, to make recommendations. What these visits actually achieve is unclear. The courses offered seem to be determined chiefly by the individual teacher's familiarity with content area and the very limited selection of textbooks and worksheets available. Moreover, since it is an absolute necessity for most parochial school teachers to hold down a second job to support their families, there is very little time or inclination to think about, or plan for, the next day's lesson, let alone the next month's.

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The private schools' in-service and curriculum development practices vary. One headmaster makes it a policy "never to visit a class," since, he says, "the department heads are responsible for all such observation." Another tries to observe one hour out of every day. A third writes extensive annual evaluations of every teacher. They collectively agree that their teachers need more and better in-service programs. One headmaster explains that though he encourages teachers to share resources and visit one another's classrooms, the success of such cross-pollination depends on vague factors such as "personality." The others agree. All of the private school administrators seem concerned, even embarrassed, about the lack of student diversity in their schools. Their school population represents a narrow band of the larger society. In classes where there are occasional minority lower- or working-class students, the school's response is not what some headmasters would hope for. "There is an expectation of amalgamating that diversity, molding it into patterns of success," says one headmaster. When such amalgamation fails, it is easier to stereotype the few minority students and to complain about the inordinate strain of addressing so many diverse needs within one class than to incorporate diversity into the curriculum or see it as an opportunity for students to learn from one another.

On another front, recent national studies—the National Commission on Excellence in Education, the Twentieth-Century Fund Task Force on Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Policy, the National Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, and others—confirm the portrait of inadequate schools and disillusioned teachers and administrators. Some claim that the best solution for financially troubled city school systems might be to declare bankruptcy. Others tout tuition tax credits as the answer to the public's dissatisfaction. Still others insist that busting the union must precede school reform, that so long as unions define the role of the teacher and the parameters of the occupation, no fruitful change will ever take place.

Perhaps schools *must* be dismantled before we can arrive at an effective system of education. Yet it may be that more modest proposals deserve consideration, for while they take time to initiate and implement, do not always produce measurable results, and depend upon total commitment and an infusion of resources, they have the potential to impact positively on teachers and students in schools. I

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would like to discuss some of these suggestions as they emerge from my observations in Libertyville classrooms.

First of all, classes must be intentionally small, ten or twenty students, at most. An optimum learning environment requires both a strong, positive, active relationship between student and teacher and a high level of student engagement. These conditions can only be met where enrollment is limited. When students can see that their teachers honestly care about them and their education, that both teachers and peers miss them when they are absent, and that their membership in the class matters, their attitude toward school and their participation in the classroom change. Teachers who are not overwhelmed by large numbers of students are able to assume major responsibility for classroom attendance (calling home, arranging for parent conferences and in-school counselling, etc.) and for the academic progress of each student. The potential for learning increases dramatically. The informal atmosphere of a small class invites greater student participation and increases communication between students and between students and teacher. Small numbers allow teachers and students to approach schooling with more humane and reasonable expectations.

A poor teacher can, of course, teach as badly in a class of fifteen students as in a class of thirty; the private schools I visited in Libertyville certainly demonstrated that size alone does not make the difference. But it is a prerequisite. The enriched educational experience in terms of student engagement that a small class invites, then, depends upon the teachers' sensitivity to students and the ability to include students in the learning process. When students are engaged in a classroom, they initiate discussion, ask questions, express relationships between ideas, connect new subject matter to their own experience and to their stored bank of knowledge, and can challenge the text, the teacher, and their peers. A history/social studies class becomes a forum for *their* concerns and issues as well as those of the teacher or the textbook author. Developing a classroom atmosphere where this kind of interaction, risk-taking, and learning can take place is not easy. It is difficult in a class of twenty-five, and next to impossible with a class of thirty.

Given a reasonable class size, a second criterion for successful education is the teacher's knowledge of the subject matter and his (or

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her) enthusiasm for it. Teacher reeducation is essential. The few dynamic, intellectually stimulating classes I observed were led by genuinely intelligent and enthusiastic teachers. Such teachers bring an organizational framework and a variety of resources to the classroom that students can neither read in a book nor see in a filmstrip. They challenge students and expect them to explore relationships between different periods of history, and between history and art or literature. Most teachers, unfortunately, are not well informed in their subject, having had little connection with the subject matter (beyond the classroom text) since they left college. They are unaware of recent literature in history or the social sciences, and their perspectives on history, as well as their interpretations, are often parochial. They are in dire need of reeducation.

There is no existing mechanism in most school systems to ensure consistent, worthwhile in-service education for veteran teachers. While some schools require teachers to enroll in an occasional course for "in-service credit," this is not always feasible. Furthermore, when teachers do take courses, they tend to enroll in only the most bland, superficial education courses rather than more demanding ones in history or literature. And once the teacher has completed a course, there is no way to ensure the introduction of this new knowledge into the classroom. School systems must provide time, in mini-sabbaticals and summer institutes, for teachers to immerse themselves in their subject area. Teachers should be granted the time, plus stipends, to take graduate courses, with the understanding that they will then be responsible for making presentations and demonstrations to other faculty members and for participation in appropriate curriculum workshops. It must be the responsibility of department heads and "master teachers" to encourage faculty members who are hesitant, reluctant, or lackadaisical about directing their own training program to do so. Arranging for teachers at the university level—in history, political science, psychology, government—to provide a series of workshops for an entire department could energize high-school faculty members and acquaint them with the wide range of available approaches to the study of history/social studies. As teachers become more informed about their subject, more enthusiastic about its variations and nuances, it will be almost inevitable that their choice of materials for students and definition of subject matter will reflect their new knowledge and their change in attitude.

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One final requirement for successful education is effective teaching style or methodology. Unfortunately, most teachers have a limited repertoire of teaching strategies. Though many of the teachers I observed are graduates of schools of education, they demonstrate little knowledge of classroom dynamics. Their teaching is no more nor less than a series of simple rituals. When the "clientele" becomes more complex, when the same tired strategies no longer work, teachers become angry, despondent, or lethargic. Their schools do not provide a setting that facilitates exploration and implementation of new ideas. Teachers teach in isolation. In the absence of peer supervision or support groups, it is almost impossible to get feedback on their teaching performance. Uninspired teacher training, busy school schedules, lack of administrative support, and the teachers' own resistance to change combine to inhibit the reevaluation and possible restructuring of classroom teaching.

To begin, university teacher-training courses must demand more and provide more. They must encourage teachers to expand rather than narrow their understanding of the process of teaching and learning. They must prompt teachers to ask more questions. Too many education courses focus on traditional teaching methodologies, strategies for discipline, and testing procedures. They do not speak to concerns relevant to today's high-school students, many of whom are illiterate or semiliterate. They do not attempt to redefine the teaching process or confront the difficulties of designing and presenting enlightening, complex, and challenging subject matter to all students. For their part, the schools must place more emphasis on significant in-service programs. Educators know enough about the failures of sporadic "consultant-for-a-day" in-service programs to avoid some of the pitfalls of the past. To ensure a modicum of success, certain prerequisites are essential. First, teacher in-service training must address directly the hard questions—what to teach and how to teach it. Those in charge of such training must include in their program highly qualified university and secondary school faculty members who share a clear understanding of the educational goals of the school and the structural impediments to change within schools. And it is not enough to merely present ideas; teachers must participate in demonstrations that illustrate how to communicate these ideas effectively. Teachers must then be given the opportunity to practice new skills, to read and research new materials, and to share their results

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with other teachers in their school engaged in the same process. The workshop leaders must be available for classroom visits and for consultations with groups of teachers.

A support system for participating teachers within the school building helps to ensure the long-range effects of the in-service training. Teachers need common times to meet and exchange ideas. They need a forum, endorsed by the school's administrators, to share their ideas and demonstrate classroom strategies for other teachers. Follow-up in-service sessions that build upon curriculum development and new teaching strategies reinforce recent changes and provide recognition for the teachers involved. This process takes time, money, and patience. It does not generate instant "systemic" change. But it does create a precedent for teacher accountability, interdependence, and personal and intellectual growth. The art of creative, intelligent teaching has lost its place in too many schools. In some schools it has become too difficult to demonstrate mastery in teaching. The lack of support, the sorry physical and emotional school atmosphere, and poor student motivation foster negative teaching and learning alike. We can, however, reverse this trend. With a renewed emphasis on the climate of the classroom and on excellence in teaching, schools can reclaim their integrity and purpose.

Change is never easy; at best, it is a process that is both frustrating and anxiety-provoking. Too often, the obstacles to constructive change within the schools themselves are ignored or misunderstood. For example, Seymour Sarason points to the lack of intelligence and sensitivity in efforts to change the agenda and atmosphere of the classroom.

> The more I have read about the personally observed efforts to introduce change in the classroom the more clear several things have become. First, those who attempt to introduce a change rarely, if ever, begin the process by being clear as to where the teachers *are*, that is, how and why they think as they do. In short, they are guilty of the very criticism they make of teachers: *not being sensitive to what and how and why children think as they do.* As a result, teachers react in much the same way that many children do and that is with the feeling they are both wrong and stupid.[4] Second, those who attempt to introduce a change seem unaware that they are asking teachers to unlearn and learn. Third, if there is any one principle common to efforts at change, it is that one effects change by *telling* people what is the "right"

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way to act and think. *Here, too, those who want change do exactly that for which they criticize teachers.*[5]

So, the process of change is not only difficult but complex. In schools where there is no sense of community, teachers have little opportunity and support for change. Some of the most productive learning and the most enthusiastic teaching seem to occur in schools that foster community. These schools engage faculty members in many different capacities. There are frequent informal meetings of students and teachers outside of the classroom. Administrative responsibilities shift from person to person every few years. Positions are loosely defined. The sociogram of a faculty member might include a broad range of teachers, administrators, and students, whose roles and duties do not necessarily coincide with that particular teacher.

Arriving at such a *gestalt* does not happen of its own accord. Teachers and administrators consciously structure their school to allow for more frequent interaction among colleagues, greater variety of positions within the faculty, and the opportunity for faculty members and students to effect change within the school community. Such an atmosphere does not of course automatically ensure self-evaluation and a willingness to adapt and change, but it does promote a feeling of common purpose, replacing the isolation and defensiveness that is so often typical of schools with a spirit of camaraderie and with genuine cooperative planning and problem-solving. In such an atmosphere, interdependence and innovation become a high priority. The groundwork is laid for a reassessment of educational procedures, goals, and curriculum, an open exchange of ideas, and the creation of a teaching plan that is appropriate and productive.

In small schools, creating such an environment demands fewer major changes than in large schools where bureaucracy complicates the most minor alteration. In large schools, teachers and administrators must develop a coherent plan, allowing the former to work together in small, manageable groups. Each school would ideally have many small communities within it. These communities would obviously need sustained nuturing in order to take root and survive. To deny that such change will involve sacrifice and turmoil is foolish. As teachers and students spend most of their day within the same "community," the smorgasbord of electives from which students choose courses will in some cases offer less variety. Some teachers who feel

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safe and comfortable in their isolation will object strenuously to efforts to establish community within the school. Again, if those in charge of initiating change lack a clear focus, are naive about the impact of change on the existing school structure, or lack the energy, dedication, and patience to give such a plan time to work, the results will be inconsequential and, probably, disruptive.

These recommendations will not be simple to execute. Reduction in class size, the opportunity for teachers to reeducate themselves, more responsible teacher training at the pre-service and in-service levels, and the development of a sense of community within the school demand careful, comprehensive planning. All are dependent upon financial and human resources. Together they raise the hope that educators and communities can gradually reinterpret the boundaries and nature of the teaching and learning processes. Without such a redefinition, reform, whether modest or sweeping, will be a meaningless exercise with little lasting positive impact on the experience of schooling. One high school's attempt to define the educational process led to an eloquent "Statement of Philosophy" that captures, for me at least, the charge and challenge of education.

> Education presumes a climate of care. . . . thoughtfulness is the social as well as the intellectual aim of education. . . . no style of learning or teaching is privileged. . . . learning is a mixture of pain and pleasure. . . .
>
> The value of learning lies not so much in its immediate utility as in its generality. Schools are instituted and maintained to serve their communities as havens of learning, not as microcosms of the marketplace. Here students are apprenticed to life in its ideal form, life that is devoted to inquiry, touched by beauty, informed by justice, guided by reason, girded by simplicity, graced by elegance. At the very least, graduates should exhibit competency in the exercise of certain skills—computation, composition—but the aim is to make them literate about the full array of human achievement, so that they will know what it means to do anything well.[6]

ENDNOTES

[1]Taken together, the private school history classes do not fulfill the goals for a social studies program as outlined in the National Study of School Evaluation: "The primary objective of the social studies program is to prepare thoughtful, active

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citizens who can function productively in a multicultural, rapidly changing, and increasingly interdependent world. The social studies program should provide a variety of affective and cognitive experiences which contribute to the dignity of each human being. These humanistic values should be realized through an open examination of controversial issues and diverse lifestyles. . . . Active experiences and participation in the democratic process are essential." National Study of School Evaluation Forms, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, 1978.

[2]This kind of history does not include "active experiences and participation in the democratic process." Ibid.

[3]National Commission on Excellence in Education, "A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform," 1983.

[4]John Holt, *How Children Fail* (New York: Pitman Publishing, 1964).

[5]Seymour B. Sarason, *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1971), p. 193.

[6]Brookline High School Ten Year Evaluation, Statement of Philosophy, Brookline, Massachusetts, 1980.

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Marlies Mueller

The Tower of Babel in Libertyville

COULD THE DESCENDANTS of Shem have happily completed the tower of Babel in Libertyville? Probably so. There seems to be, for all the diversity of local ethnic groups, no "confusion of tongues," no multiplicity of languages to impede communication in the foreign language classes of its secondary schools. Neither students nor teachers, while they may utter examples of grammar constructions in Italian, French, Spanish, or German, *communicate* in any other language but English.

It has been amply demonstrated in the course of the history of foreign language pedagogy that if students are to learn to *speak* a second language, *speak* it they must. Though this may seem tautological, language teaching managed to proceed for a long time, and still does, in many instances, as though unaware of this simple truth. While reading, writing, and listening are crucial factors in the acquisition of a second language, oral fluency can only be acquired by speaking the language in situations that involve genuine communication. Yet, in Libertyville, in class after class purporting to teach students to understand, read, write, and speak a foreign language, the language is spoken only in bone-dry grammar exercises, never in an authentic exchange of ideas or information. To the student, then, the message implied within the content and activities of most foreign language classes is that speaking a language other than English is an abstract activity, much like solving a crossword puzzle. But when we want to say something "real," such as, "I need a pencil," or "Mary, would you please sit over there!" only one language medium seems viable—English. Why is the target language so rarely used for com-

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munication in the classroom? A partial answer to that question soon imposes itself.

In half of the classrooms visited, the teachers had only a fair to poor *active* command of the grammar and/or pronunciation of the language they taught. One teacher had learned Spanish a few weeks prior to the beginning of the school year. In general, serious grammatical errors (gender, adjective, and past-participle agreement, adverb/adjective confusion, errors in syntax and morphology) were common, and the command of grammar of several teachers was inadequate to the point where they would have had difficulty attaining Level 3 on the Foreign Service Institute Language Proficiency Scale.[1]

Should school administrators, therefore, seek to employ exclusively, or give preference to, native speakers of the foreign languages they teach? The answer must be an emphatic "no!" Experience has proved that instructors who teach what is for them a second or third language show a greater sensitivity to the problems, stumbling blocks, translation pitfalls, interference mistakes, and pronunciation errors faced by the second language learner than do native speakers. They know shortcuts in learning, can point out analogies to the students' own language and culture, and often their tone and manner are more suited to American high-school students than that of foreign teachers. Thus teachers who themselves went through the process of learning the foreign language they are teaching have considerable advantages over the basically monolingual-monocultural teacher. Nevertheless, all foreign language teachers should have a near-native command of the grammar and reasonably authentic pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm.

A further answer to the question why students do not communicate effectively in a second language soon suggests itself. Three quarters of the teachers whose classes we visited used what is commonly known in foreign language pedagogy as the grammar-translation method. Its origins date back to a time in the late nineteenth century when modern languages were trying to earn recognition, alongside Latin and ancient Greek, as legitimate and valuable aids in forming the intellect. Hence the modern languages were taught (and still are) in the same manner as the classical languages: after the deductively presented grammar (i.e., first stating the rule, then the example) has been absorbed and applied in purely abstract exercises, and long vocabulary lists memorized, these efforts come to fruition in the transla-

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tion of great texts. Aural/oral skills are irrelevant to this endeavor, for the essence of language study here is mental training and the development of abstract thinking capabilities in the college-bound. The tenacity with which teachers of foreign languages still adhere to this method, despite today's radically different (communication-oriented) purposes of language study, is not altogether surprising. Those of us who are middle-aged were probably taught by this method, or a close relative of it, and unless we have also been thoroughly familiarized with another method, we tend to perpetuate it.

The audiolingual method, with its emphasis on speaking and listening skills, was inaugurated after World War II, when it was thought that, to maintain world peace, Americans should be able to understand and speak with peoples from other nations and cultures. Structural linguists, drawing on the then-recent discoveries in the fields of psychology and sociology, promoted the inculcation of speech habits through the memorization of building blocks (instead of isolated vocabulary items), fast-paced responses (which eliminate even mental translation), and reinforcement through drills and repetition. The goal was, and still is, to facilitate the acquisition of language skills and to minimize the anxiety that often characterizes second language learning. This is done by creating an atmosphere of trust and respect in the classroom and by eliminating, as much as possible, the psychological disadvantage that teenagers who are especially self-conscious tend to suffer, and that often prevents them from engaging in genuine conversation in a foreign language.

Through the *Sputnik*-era largesse, the proponents of this method received the funding necessary to spread its use nationwide, and it still enjoys a large following today, chiefly as modified by the approaches whose main features are briefly outlined below.

Some of the principal modern (or resuscitated) practices, of which the best and most effective ideas and successful techniques were combined with the audiolingual approach, are:

1. The *direct method,* also rooted in the nineteenth century, encourages students to *think in the foreign language* by eliminating all use of the native language in the classroom. Vocabulary and phrases of the target language are presented through direct association with classroom objects and through pictorial representations or actions performed by teachers and students. The use of the native language

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(hence, translation) is banned from the classroom. Grammar is taught inductively (students are confronted with many examples and derive the rules themselves) and in the target language. Subsequent modifications simplify the teacher's task somewhat in allowing the use of the native language for the explanation of difficult grammar points or for vocabulary items that are not easily acted out and for which visual aids are unavailable.

2. The *cognitive-code approach* (born in the late 1960s in response to charges levelled against audiolingualism that students were parroting phrases without understanding their meaning) places a strong emphasis on deductive grammar explanations, addressing the students' reasoning capabilities, and ensuring solid comprehension of subject matter. While these features draw heavily on the grammar-translation method, the cognitive-code approach differs fundamentally by insisting on the conscious use, at every step, of the newly acquired structures in a meaningful, authentic context.

3. The *natural language learning approach* (proposed in the 1970s, but built on nineteenth century practices) is an attempt to approximate the manner in which children learn their first language, thus dispensing with formal instruction and relying exclusively on informal communication between teacher and student, or on student interaction in a relaxed and supportive ambiance.

Thus there are a number of techniques to choose from, and the choice, or the exact dosage of each, to be used for the successful lesson plan for any given day generally reflects personal taste and temperament, no one technique having absolute value or excluding the use of others. The guidelines provided by the National Study of School Evaluation, 1978, drawn up by experts well-versed in modern foreign language pedagogy, however, implicitly postulate (through the nature of the goals it prescribes) the use of the post-World War II methodologies in preference to the grammar-translation method.

Yet, although the majority of the teachers visited in Libertyville have the appropriate academic degrees, only a handful use modern methods of language teaching and keep abreast of recent developments through professional reading.

Most teachers spoke *about* the target language, rarely *in* it, and hardly gave students an opportunity to speak at all. In public and

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parochial schools, traditional seating arrangements underlined the wish of the "magister" to occupy the center of the stage, indifferent to the apathetic and unappreciative audience dozing in the shadows. In some of the private schools, an effort had been made to facilitate student-centered teaching, and chairs were neatly arranged in a circle or semicircle. The futility of such "window-dressing," however, became apparent the moment the teacher proceeded to hold an entirely teacher-centered lesson. As it happened, the placement of the chairs provided a much-needed opportunity for comic relief to the students, as those who sat on the side of the teacher could make faces at the others without being observed by him.

In general, the structure of the typical lesson consisted of a dull point-by-point rundown of the textbook's exercises, punctuated alternatively by (often fuzzy) grammar explanations and by reading and translating uninteresting passages.

Not everywhere, however, was the picture this bleak. Some of the teachers who relied on the grammar-translation method in an almost pristine form were able to interest and challenge students, and conduct a lively class, because of their warm, friendly personalities. But those few teachers who had been schooled in modern foreign language pedagogy, or who had taken the time to inform themselves, taught the most successful classes, by any standard, by engaging students in as authentic a form of communication in the target language as the classroom setting permitted. One such teacher, in particular, stood out: her obvious sense of purpose and her easy mastery of technique fostered an enthusiasm among her twelve-year-old pupils that overcame all linguistic difficulties. She clearly felt a genuine missionary zeal to clear the monocultural cobwebs and to bring her students to love the target language and culture as she does.

Why are not more teachers willing or able to muster this kind of evangelistic attitude toward their professional endeavors? Are the answers to this question related to the prevailing feelings of faculty members about the future of foreign language teaching?

Some teachers, primarily from exclusive private schools (not, surprisingly, those who teach good classes), felt that the increased consciousness of a shrinking world on the part of their community as a whole boded well for the future of foreign language teaching, and that the interest level in learning other languages was rising, or would do so shortly. The changes this small group of optimists wanted to

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see are: (1) the implementation of the foreign language entrance requirement at more and more colleges; (2) language instruction beginning in the fifth or sixth grade; (3) foreign language requirements in all public schools; (4) summer programs overseas; and (5) students with a better command of English.

The vast majority, however, whether in the private or public school systems, expressed bitterness and pessimism, either directly, in private conversation, or indirectly, in their lack of enthusiasm in the classroom and through the use of heavy sarcasm in their tone of voice and attitude toward students. To quote some typically caustic remarks: "You, who are vegetating over there . . . don't exert yourself, it might give you a heart attack." Or, "Sorry to disturb your rest period. . . . You look as though you need divine assistance" (to answer the question). Or, "I should make you write this five hundred times."

Those who expressed their pessimism directly felt that language teaching is doomed. Since the sixties, they argued, language textbooks have been written that make fewer and fewer demands on students, who in turn respond by accomplishing less and less. Thus it is felt that all are sliding along a descending spiral toward a not-too-distant future when foreign language teaching will disappear altogether from curricula.

Others were dismayed at seeing their language classes replaced by science courses as a consequence of the sense of emergency in science education that has swept the nation. Still others, deeply depressed by falling language enrollments, blamed the school administration for their plight. Guidance counselors, they explained, at present merely suggest to half-listening students to *try* such and such a course, with the result that no sooner do they encounter the first onerous verb paradigm in a foreign language class, than students drop the course and try to find an easier subject to study. Later on, the brighter students, who despite their modest socioeconomic background have prospects of going to college, may find to their disappointment that the lack of a foreign language may close the doors to them to the college of their choice.

Regardless of the general pessimism about the present negative ambiance for student learning, a number of positive suggestions emerged. The language faculty of a middle school argued persuasively that slow learners or those who have difficulties in English classes

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should not be automatically discouraged from learning a second language. These teachers are convinced that any child not afflicted with dyslexia is capable of learning a foreign language and should be encouraged to do so. In addition, they recommended the implementation of a set of four-year curricula in the middle schools predicated upon the course of study a student would wish to enter (college preparatory, business, etc.). This, they believe, would give a sorely lacking "academic tone" to the school. (Since 1980, when the faculty of the middle school drew up such a set of four-year curricula and presented it to the school administration, the repeated attempts to have these changes implemented have been met only with polite interest. No objections to the ideas were ever made known to the faculty, yet, so far, no action has been taken.)

Much as many of their colleagues do, they feel that the school administrators' timidity mirrors today's apathetic, if not downright negative, sentiments toward language teaching on the part of society as a whole. Consequently, students cannot be expected to take language courses seriously or to invest the necessary hard work, application, and energy to learn a second language well.

These factors serve to intensify the foreign language teachers' feelings of insecurity about their role in American high-school education and their doubts about their professional identity, and perhaps contribute to the lackluster quality of their teaching. But what about the students? Are their needs being met by the choice of foreign language offerings in Libertyville's schools? What are their attitudes to foreign languages?

Even though Libertyville has a large Italian community, three of the major private schools do not offer instruction in Italian. The reason for this, we were somewhat peremptorily told, is that Italian is not as useful as French or Spanish in fulfilling college requirements. Nevertheless, at one private school where Italian is offered, enrollment figures are high, regardless of its future usefulness, and most students enrolled seemed to be of Italian background. The same pattern—primarily Italian names during roll call—was apparent in the public school Italian courses, although a particularly dedicated teacher of Italian in an inner-city public school attracted members of other ethnic groups to his classes. Are these students of Italian members of the famous third generation of Americans who, socioeconomically

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and culturally secure in their Anglo-Saxon environment, are seeking to rediscover and reaffirm their ethnic roots?

Several students in a French class at a public middle school (who were engrossed in the comics section of the local newspaper instead of in the subtle uses of the demonstrative pronoun) complained of not having been accepted in a Spanish class. To quote one: "I am Portuguese, and I want to take either Portuguese or Spanish, not French. But there was no room in the Spanish class." Although 24.8 percent of the students in the school are Portuguese, instruction in their language is not offered at the school, and Spanish classes are oversubscribed.

Teachers tended to discount the students' reasons for preferring Spanish to French, claiming that Spanish is considered easier to learn: "French *is* the foreign language tradition in this country; Spanish is the dumping ground for weak students."

Yet because of demographic changes and a desire on the part of Hispanic immigrants to preserve their cultural heritage, a decreasing interest in French and an increasing demand for Spanish is currently a general phenomenon throughout schools and colleges in the United States. It seems that the "poorer" private schools, such as an inner-city Catholic school where French was phased out two years ago because of a lack of demand, are adapting more readily to these changes, whereas the more expensive private schools and, above all, the public schools have been slower to respond.

Teachers at schools that serve recent immigrant populations report that their students still regard speaking a foreign tongue not as a sign of education and sophistication, but as a stigma of inferiority. These reports clearly contradict the concerns voiced by the Portuguese students above and suggest that many recent immigrant groups continue, in the old melting-pot tradition, to want to shed their ethnicity and blend into the predominantly Anglo-Saxon culture. Thus the schools merely reflect the presence of conflicting values and trends among the city's population.

At some parochial schools there is the additional complaint that family pressures influence girls to regard marriage as the only worthwhile aim in life, and educational pursuits, particularly the study of a foreign language, because of its level of difficulty, as secondary, if not lower, in importance.

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Students in some independent schools start language study in the fifth grade in a nonsystematic, playful manner, theoretically in order to enjoy the pleasure of speaking a foreign tongue without the drudgery of verb paradigms. After having studied French for one year in this manner, one such class was still trying to master phrases such as "*Quelle heure est-il?*"—material that reasonably bright youngsters in a structured class could be expected to have conquered after the first two weeks of the school year. Consequently, the children tend to think of language study as a frivolous undertaking, not a serious educational pursuit, and many wish to discontinue it.

Paradoxical as it may seem, however, when forced by a requirement to continue, the students respond positively to a structured, systematic approach, and in the majority of cases, abandon their negative attitude toward language learning.

These unfortunate experiences with early "all frills-no content" exposure to foreign language study are significant because:

1. Other private schools in Libertyville have plans to embark upon a similar path, that is, of offering "introductory," nonmethodical, unstructured language courses at the fifth-grade level.

2. One of the most important items in the city administrators' plan for revitalizing language study is precisely to "entice" students toward second-language learning in a one-semester course at the sixth-grade level, through travelogues and other "fun-filled" informal exposures to language and culture. The consequences of these well-intentioned efforts will certainly be to trivialize an inherently difficult subject and to dispose students to "play" with a foreign culture (are we not all too familiar with the caricatures that inevitably result from simplistic characterizations and stereotypes?). Students thus shielded from the serious mental effort required in foreign language study cannot help but hold it in low esteem.

The lack of flexibility in the choice of foreign language offerings on the part of many schools, the "infantilizing" of a field of study that by its very nature requires a certain amount of earnest application, the resistance to learning a second language by puzzled and disconcerted students, and the mark of inferiority thought to attach to speaking a foreign tongue—all appear related to the ambivalence that seems pervasive in Libertyville's schools (as perhaps in the com-

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munity or even the country as a whole) about whether and why foreign languages should be studied at all.

The reasons for studying a second language, or for being unwilling to do so, are as varied as the plans, the aims, and the ambitions (or their lack) of students and their parents. Much has been written about the ever more urgent necessity for Americans to break out of the narrow provincialism born of a vast monolingual continent. If the recent report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education provides us with some answers, it seems clear that being able to communicate with speakers of other tongues ranks high on the list of reasons for foreign language study.

Why has the response of high schools been only lukewarm? The resources to do better are plainly available. In the public schools, stacks and stacks of brand new foreign language books can be seen sitting on closet shelves, as in a well-supplied supermarket waiting for the consumer; classroom space goes begging (in many of the classrooms visited, a mere handful of children sat forlorn in rooms with thirty to forty seats); and, most important of all, there are many bright students who are *capable* of learning a second language. In the majority of cases, they would be eager to apply themselves if the laboriously slow and painful methods now in use were to be abandoned in favor of approaches that engage students in the joy of communicating in another language from the very beginning; that, further, fill them with a sense of achievement as they learn to express their thoughts and feelings in written and spoken form in a foreign language, to read with fluency, and to understand a native speaker of the target language.

Why, then, given the ingredients necessary for successful language programs, is there this dearth in the midst of plenty? What is lacking? Is it the will to excellence and the commitment to high standards on the part of administrators, principals, and teachers alike? Students will perform to the standards set by the community. If the community is apathetic, or worse, if it evinces a lack of faith in the intelligence and capability of its children to learn foreign languages, then—in the form of a self-fulfilling prophecy—these children will attach little importance to such academic pursuits, will not learn well, and worse, their conduct in class will poison teacher-student interaction.

Yet, whether in private or public schools, those few genuinely caring and enthusiastic teachers who engaged students' interests enjoyed

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attentive, alert, and well-behaved pupils. This was particularly striking in an Italian class at an inner-city school, where the teacher managed to create a warm, friendly ambiance in spite of having to teach two levels in one classroom; and, most impressively, in an exceptionally well-taught French class at a public middle school, whose teacher, encouraging and kind, yet firm, addressed the students of an elementary class of twenty-seven (all present!) in French from the moment she entered the classroom. Grammar was taught inductively, yet perfectly clearly; the lesson moved at a smart pace; and she seized every opportunity to personalize the material and to engage students in a meaningful discussion and exchange. Her well-prepared lesson plan included a large variety of activities, a balance of the four language skills, and ample occasion for every student to participate. Consequently, all students were alert and showed obvious pleasure at being able to speak French at a natural speed and with a good accent after only a few months of study. At one private school, on the other hand, during a poorly taught class (of gifted and highly motivated students, according to the teacher), students quipped and wisecracked until the brightest student, clearly bored and exasperated, misbehaved and was sent from the room.

The worst behavior occurred predictably in the public schools. Upon entering the classroom, some students sat down, placed their heads on folded arms, and appeared to drift into deep, undisturbed sleep for the hour. (Did they hold down a job at night?) Others used the class time for grooming purposes: putting on mascara and lipstick, or brushing their hair. At a middle school, six (of approximately twenty) students openly read newspapers, tossing sections to each other, or walking through the class to fetch another part of the paper. More active students shot projectiles (pen, paper) through the air, and at a high school, someone spilled talcum powder over students, books, and desks. A reprimand from the teacher resulted in a shouting match. But, in general, when faced with self-absorbed teachers, children would withdraw into their inner world, disrupting the teacher's monologue only occasionally with a question that, at times, received an erroneous answer. (For example, "Who occupied Spain during Roman times?" asked one student. "The Moors," came the self-assured reply.)

While in only three of the eighteen classes visited was there genuine communication in the foreign language (an elementary French

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class at a public middle school, a second-year Spanish class at a public high school, and an advanced Spanish class at a private school), in seven classes, student/teacher interaction took the form of a battle of wills in an atmosphere of tension and mutual resentment. To my amazement, I found my sympathies to be on the side of the students, who seemed in many cases to be brighter than their teachers and who appeared not so much to be uncontrollable adolescents full of ill will (as they are often depicted) as the sacrificial victims of dull, morose teachers. I must hasten to add here that all the teachers I visited were without exception charming and delightful people on a personal level, but many of them, as they stepped over the threshold of their classrooms, wrapped themselves in an invisible cloak of apathy: gone was the easy smile, and an attitude of gloomy indifference infused all that they said and did.

Most schools use mainstream, relatively recent programs for elementary language study, with the surprising exception of what is reputedly the best high school in Libertyville, which clings to an outdated text. Almost all of the teachers teach "straight out of the book" and make little effort to exploit texts creatively.

I have long felt that AP programs produce stunted university students, and my experience in Libertyville only reinforced this conviction. While the texts taught were taken from the great literature of a particular culture, these works were only studied on the most superficial level; no examination of the underlying values and beliefs of the culture was undertaken, although a number of opportunities presented themselves. No discussion was attempted, and students were confined to monosyllabic answers.

In view of the meager results obtained in spite of a large investment of valuable time, perhaps some old questions bear reexamination. Are many of the private schools perhaps concentrating their efforts too much on guaranteeing their students access to college, and too little on providing a solid basic background that leaves time to explore some questions in greater depth? Are the AP programs suffering from the disadvantages associated with studying to pass a particular examination at the expense of broader educational goals, and do students have to make do with the once-over-lightly generalities on a large number of works?

Visual aids, such as magazines, newspapers, and posters were much in evidence in most schools, but I did not actually see them

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being used; they seemed to serve more as decoration than as an imaginative learning tool. Filmstrips and videotapes, in spite of ready availability, seem to be rarities in language classes. During one lesson, a quarter hour of class time was taken up with explaining (in English!) why no film would be shown this year (because of administrative confusion).

Only two of the schools visited—one a public school, the other parochial—have language laboratories. I visited a French class held in the lab of a public school where students, instead of responding to the monotonous, highly artificial exercises that droned into our ears, talked to each other, watched the clock, or slept. The hour ticked away in boredom and frustration, instead of providing a challenging and enjoyable learning experience.

At the parochial school, where the language laboratory equipment is built into the desks in the one classroom where all language teaching takes place, it has "recently" been discovered that the keys to activate the sets had disappeared. This was not regarded as particularly deplorable by the only language teacher in the school, nor by the children, I suspect, mainly because the only tapes available accompanied a previous edition of the textbook in use, and there are no funds to purchase the tapes for the current edition. I found this somewhat cavalier attitude in a school of meager and dwindling resources rather surprising, but suspect that the lab was never used imaginatively and to good advantage, and therefore its temporary or perhaps indefinite unavailability was not greatly regretted by anyone.

In general, the large investment necessary to equip a modern language laboratory does not seem justifiable at the high-school level. If, as seems to be the case, laboratory work must be done during the regularly scheduled class hours and cannot be assigned as supplementary homework, then in most instances, the use of mechanical equipment is inferior in effectiveness to a good teacher. This is particularly true because there are so few truly creative laboratory programs and materials on the market that could engage students' interests.

At two private schools, the absence of a language laboratory was more than adequately compensated for by the use of a small cassette recorder brought by the teacher. Thus, in one class, the pronunciation of the "E muet" in poetry and song was effectively demonstrated by playing a song by Brassens, and in another class, the diction of an

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actor of the *Comédie française* was brilliantly analyzed by means of this simple inexpensive device.

Mr. X, the public school administrator in charge of foreign language education, seems acutely aware of the necessity to combat both the poor public school image and the decreasing language enrollments. He, as well as all teachers, regard the absence of foreign language requirements by many colleges as a clear signal to students and parents that the knowledge of a second language is not valued and rewarded in this country today. They point emphatically to the reinstitution of such requirements as the single most important factor in the revitalization of foreign language study.

Among his other suggestions for reinvigorating foreign language teaching were:

1. *Instituting preforeign language programs.* The present teaching approaches are perceived by Mr. X as being too traditional to maintain student interest, since there is "too much emphasis placed on grammar." Therefore, starting next year there will be "preforeign language programs" offered for three hours per week for one semester in the sixth and seventh grades, consisting of conversation and cultural awareness instruction (travel guides, music, filmstrips, etc.). The stated purpose of this program is to introduce students to language study in a pleasurable atmosphere and to awaken the desire in them to continue studying a second language at a higher level.

2. *Changing the image of the public school through the media.* Local newspapers, which had a tendency to concentrate on negative news, were presented with an offer they could not refuse: unless they printed favorable news about the public schools occasionally, they would no longer be kept informed about school activities. The administrator claims this strategy has worked well and that the papers are cooperating.

While such "deals" may achieve positive results in building a better, or at least a less damaging, image of the schools in the public mind, it must be clear that a change in substance will in the long run be more effective than what amounts to a skillful public relations stratagem.

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With regard to the first suggestion, I can only reiterate what I said earlier. If the experience with "preforeign language programs" at private schools is repeated in the public sector, the result could well mean that even fewer students will be attracted to the study of a second language. The notion of frivolity or triviality will attach itself to language study, and the classes will be viewed negatively by concerned parents and shunned as irrelevant to their future by students. Is this well-meaning administrator perhaps addressing his revitalization plan to the militant students of the sixties and early seventies, who chafed at the limits placed on their freedom and who demanded that requirements be replaced with courses of "immediate relevance"? Are not the students of the eighties, in a typical swing of the pendulum, seeking guidelines and structure? And are they not perplexed at the lack of courage of educators and frustrated by the lack of purpose they perceive in their education?

It seems fair to say that language teaching in the high schools visited is, by and large, mediocre, and that students react either by not enrolling in language courses where they have a choice, or by openly displaying their *ennui,* where they do not.

Contrary to our expectations, there was no substantial difference in the quality of the language teaching between private and public schools. Some private schools showed thoughtful, imaginative, and creative programs on paper, but they proved disappointing in the classroom. The spectrum in teaching quality was wider in the public schools. Most teachers, however, whether in private or public schools, lack training in modern language pedagogy, and consequently, they tend to perpetuate the grammar-translation method by which they themselves were taught.

What seems like a lack of enthusiasm for the subject on the part of the teacher may, however, in many cases merely be an absence of skill, of technique. As we have seen in some Libertyville schools, students responded eagerly to expertly prepared lessons using modern methods. If teachers can come to see their role as one that engages students in a *process*—the stimulating process of acquiring a skill, with transmission of abstract knowledge no longer the exclusive aim—then language classes will lose their atmosphere of wearisome silence or combative malevolence and could become an exhilarating, vital experience for both students and teacher.

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What changes would be conducive to effect positive results, and what, if all were for the best in the best of possible worlds, could be done to implement them? Three separate but related issues seem to be involved: guaranteeing that teachers have a minimum level of proficiency in the language they teach; stimulating teachers to use modern teaching techniques; and devising and implementing successful foreign language curricula.

1. *Guaranteeing that teachers have a minimum level of proficiency in the language they teach.* In order to ensure professional standards of competence, such competence must be demonstrated before a body of qualified judges. In comparison with the relative ease of testing reading, writing, and aural comprehension skills, testing oral skills has long proved elusive. The highly efficient means to test oral proficiency in foreign languages, developed by the Foreign Service Institute over the past thirty years, might well serve as a model or guide in this endeavor. The FSI system offers detailed definitions in both linguistic and functional terms for each point on a certain scale. This scale, used in numerous government agencies for many years, has become widely known through a series of conferences that started in 1977 to familiarize college teachers all over the country with it, to train them in its use, and to spread it among their colleagues. It might, therefore, not be necessary to fund and establish a brand new bureaucratic machinery to assure uniform standards of competency for language teachers, since at least some of the necessary elements seem to be in place already.

2. *Stimulating teachers to use modern teaching techniques.* The problem of motivating teachers to take more than a passing interest in foreign language pedagogy and to acquire effective teaching techniques has shown itself to be a thorny one. Since neither conferences, occasional workshops, nor in-service teacher training seems to have effected desirable changes, is it perhaps time to take more decisive, more far-reaching, and longer-term steps? What resources, for example, could universities muster to provide more than token gestures toward a meaningful involvement with high-school teaching? The foreign language departments of many universities have large and outstandingly successful language teaching programs. Would they, in a collaborative venture with high schools in their area, share some of their best human resources to help solve the very real crisis in foreign

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language teaching? We learned from past disappointing experiences that interposing a bureaucratic machinery of coordinators and committees and boards (as well as enormous sums of money) is counterproductive and ends in failure. Therefore, we propose direct, long-term "adoption"; that is, that each professor commit himself or herself to work closely over a period of several years with a limited number of high-school teachers (perhaps ten), who in turn (in order to cause a ripple effect) would commit themselves to working with a fixed number of their colleagues, not included in the first group. Would such an enterprise be regarded by high-school teachers as unwelcome, meddlesome, and patronizing interference? Would it be feasible to obtain, for this purpose, release-time from both public schools and universities, with expenses paid on both sides? And, most important, would our university and high-school colleagues, in spite of the heavy loads many of them carry, respond to this challenge? We feel confident that once the teachers met each other, our university colleagues would experience the desire (as happened to those of us working on this report) to gain an understanding of how their subject can best be taught to younger students. We trust that they would welcome the opportunity to help high-school teachers break out of their apparently professional isolation. By sharing knowledge and expertise in a common endeavor to enrich the classroom experience, university teachers would exert a vital influence on the formation of their own future students.

3. *Devising and implementing successful foreign language curricula.* Those of us teaching a foreign language at the college level are painfully aware of the extent to which our time and resources, not to mention those of our students, are spent on remedial work. This holds true, not only for two-year or state colleges, but even for selective colleges and universities, which must do more remedial work than many of us believe they should. Why commit this nation to such an uneconomical use of scarce resources? Could the same ends be accomplished not only more economically but more effectively at the high-school level? Psychologists, biologists, and language teachers concur: the early teens are the optimum age to acquire a second language, both in terms of quality (accent and intonation) and long-term retention. While it is relatively difficult for fourth-graders or fifth-graders to handle abstractions, they absorb facts, rules, and de-

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tails with rapidity and success. The preteenage and young teenage period is a splendid time in the development of the mind to learn a foreign language, provided this instruction offers continuity. The one or even two years offered under the current system are plainly insufficient. Skills and knowledge diminish quickly, and the residue is pitifully small. Who has not heard the familiar complaint: "I took a year of French in high school, but I don't remember a thing"? Disenchantment is inevitable. In few other subjects is forgetting as lamentably evident as in foreign language study. Don't most people go through life blissfully unaware of how much they have forgotten about history or English or biology? Psycholinguists argue persuasively for active use and reuse of all speech elements in each of the four language skills over an extended period of time if long-term retention and control are to be achieved. If at age forty we wish to read research articles or books in French, take a business trip to Senegal, enjoy a play at the *Comédie française,* or help a Francophone traveler in this country, we would be able to do so if we had studied French every year, say, between grades five and twelve for three periods a week. Through reinforcement, over seven to nine years, through keeping alive what has been learned, applying it in different situations, and constantly adding to the acquired fund of knowledge, we can achieve true assimilation of a foreign language and, above all, a knowledge and skill that will not be lost to us the moment the doors close behind us at high-school graduation.

We are aware that we are asking for far-reaching changes in the curricula, but how else can our students achieve the following lofty goals set for foreign language study by the National Study of School Education?

> The linguistic and cultural components of the language program will help students better understand their own language(s) as well as those of other people. Additionally, foreign language study enhances insights into the thought patterns and social institutions of others; it facilitates communication; it fosters a sense of humanity; it prepares for career opportunities; and it assists students in adapting to the multiethnic environments and value orientations of others within their society.

Little of this is happening in Libertyville today.

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ENDNOTES

[1]"*Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics.* Can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease; comprehension is quite complete for a normal rate of speech; vocabulary is broad enough that [the speaker] rarely has to grope for a word; control of grammar good; errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker." The FSI proficiency guidelines are now known as Interagency Language Roundtable proficiency ratings. These are the bases for the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for schools and colleges.

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